

**A BOOK OF
SHORT STORIES**

FOR
INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS
EDITED WITH NOTES

R. L. Basur

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PREFACE

The Short Story as a distinct literary form is a peculiar product of the modern times. It is easily the most popular literary type of the present day, as is clear from the existence of the very large number of Short Story Magazines published in all languages all over the world. Its literary technique is in many ways altogether different from that of the novel and its aims and objects are also at variance with those of the earlier forms of prose fiction. In view of its comparative brevity, we demand of it a certain literary finish and perfection that places it along side the lyric and the essay. In its structure and style it is nearest the One Act Play, another characteristic literary type of the present day. Hence its importance in any course of reading prescribed for the post-matriculation standard.

The stories included in this selection are by some of the greatest masters of the Short Story from Britain, the U. S.A., France, Russia and India. The Story by Mulkh Raj Anand will certainly prove of special interest to the students of the Jammu and Kashmir University. It is expected that the stories selected will stimulate the student to attempt a closer acquaintance with the works of the authors introduced to him.

EDITOR

A KASHMIR IDYLL

IT was about ten years ago, during a brief visit to Kashmir, that the incident I am going to relate took place. But neither time nor space has blurred the deep impression it made on me then, and it has haunted me for many days, so that I must needs put it down.

There were originally four of us in the party including myself, the three others being a tall, imposing Sikh gentleman, both *taylor-made*¹ and God-made; a sensitive young poet, a Kashmiri whose family had emigrated to the plains and made good as Kashmiris always do when once they have left the land where, though nature is kind and generous, man has for centuries most foully and cruelly oppressed man; and a hill boy who cooked for us.

We had loaded our luggage on a tonga and walked the three hundred and seventy-five miles on the road from Jammu, across the Himalayas in slow stages, by the beds of the silent Tawi and the surging Chenab. On the peak of the Banihal we had held conversation with the wind that comes from the Kashmir valley, bearing a load of loveliness and pain, the golden exhalation of the saffron and the white sighs of a people who toil unrewarded.

We had descended to the natural spring of Veri Nag from which a few drops of water trickle into a stream that becomes the River Jhelum at Islamabad, where it divides the whole valley into two halves and

flows into Lake Wullar and then cuts its way through two hundred miles of mountains into the plains.

From Veri Nag, a village of dark and *labyrinthine*² streets full of small mud-huts, the multi-coloured flowers on whose roofs give no hint of the misery which dwells within, we had traversed the main valley by a dusty road bordered by cubist poplars and cypresses.

We had made our headquarters in a houseboat at Srinagar. Then, taking the advice of a tourist's guide book which the government of His Highness the Maharaja of Kashmir had designed specifically for the use of English visitors, though a few Indians also took advantage of it, if they had a smattering of the wonderful, official language, we had decided to undertake short trips to the remote valleys and the unspoiled outlying ranges of the Himalayas within the borders of Kashmir.

We visited the Sonamarg valley where the scarlet eyes of the morning are blinded by the glare of the snow that lies perpetually on the mountain peaks, leading through the Zojila Pass to Chota Tibet, and where the sleep of the night is continually disturbed by the growling of the angry Indus rushing through glaciers and across high rocks and boulders on its tortuous passages across the Punjab.

We went to Gulmarg, the valley of wild roses ; to Linanmarg, where the lilies of the field grow for miles and miles and miles, angelic and melancholy. We ascended to Aparwat, the high peak above Gul-

marg, on the top of which is a crystal-clear pool that echoes back the faintest whisper.

We saw Gandarbal and Hari Parbat, the Shalimar and the Nishat; we went everywhere, devouring the beauty of Kashmir's landscapes, trudging along its byways, loitering among its stars, squandering whole days and weeks in search of exquisite moments.

And then there was nothing left to do except to sail among the waterways of the valley, to seek new harbours for our houseboat in the Dal Lake and in the shadows of the various gardens, wherever the caprice of our idle wills directed the heart-shaped oars of our boatmen.

A cousin of the poet of our company, a nobleman and courtier of His Highness the Maharaja, who had sought us out in an obscure corner of the Dal, and showered the blessings of fruit and meat and drink upon us with a generosity that betokened his eminence and affluence, offered us the hospitality of an island he possessed nearby.

Though grateful for his kindness, we had been finding the gentleman's hospitality rather embarrassing, because it involved us in a friendship with the great man, which we could not spontaneously accept. For His Grace was rather a silly young man with the manners of a *lout*³ and a high blood pressure in his too opulent flesh, so we excused ourselves by saying that we were intending soon to complete our tour of the valley by going in our kitchen-boat to the Wullar. But it was not so easy for us to escape

from the tentacles that he spread around us by that slick and sure turn of phrase that had so obviously carried him to his high position at Court. He suggested that if we didn't accept his hospitality he would like to accept our hospitality and accompany us to the Wullar 'in your kitchen-boat for a change, because,' he said, 'I am tired of this grand style in which I have to live and would like to be one of you.'

We were so bounden to the Nawab Zaffar Ullah, as the worthy was called, for the many favours he had heaped on us that we naturally could not refuse him, even though he became more patronizing and added that not only would he like to come with us, but two of his most intimate friends would like to accompany us also, and that he would like to supply provisions and order extra boatmen for our service on the way.

We were in for it and we accepted all his offers, because it would have been more strenuous to find excuses than to let ourselves become completed ineffectual pawns in his high hands. And, accompanied by him and his friends (a surly little judge of the High Court of Kashmir, and a most superficial young trader in hides and skins), we started one evening.

The shades of night were falling and we floated through the heaven and the earth in a dream as yet slightly disturbed by the Nawab and his companions.

The river flowed, and our boat flowed with it, without much help from our boatman, his wife, his sister, or his little daughter.

But we had hardly retired to the silent places of our heart when dinner was announced.

The Nawab had brought a sumptuous meal prepared by his servants all ready to be served—rice, coloured and scented with saffron, curried fowls perfumed with musk, and there were goblets of champagne, bottled in 1889.

Having compromised us into accepting his delicious food, it was only natural that the Nawab should deem it fit to amuse us with the gifts of his speech. He told a few dirty stories and then launched into a discourse of which the *ribaldry*⁴ was so highly spiced with a deliberate obscenity that whoever felt nauseated or not, I, at least, who have never been over-righteous, turned aside, thought of the pride of my emotions, made my words the stars and surrendered myself to the bosom of the night.

When we awoke at dawn our boat had unbarred the flood-gates and glided into a veritable ocean of light. For, as far as I could see, for miles, the azure waters of the Wullar spread around us, fluttering a vast expanse of mercury within the borders of the fiery sun-scorched hills.

The Nawab sought to entertain us with a song. But his voice was cracked and only his two friends sat appreciatively acclaiming his genius, while we wandered off to different points of the boat, helping with the cooking, dressing or lazily contemplating the wizardry by which nature had written a poem of broken glass, crumbling earth and blue-red fire.

For, truly, the Wullar is a magnificent spectacle under the red sky at morning.

I gazed upon the placid plain of water spell-bound, enchanted. I lent myself to the whispers of the rippling breeze that was awakening the sleepy lotuses; tempted by an unbearable desire to be one with it, I plunged headlong into its midst and bathed in it to my heart's desire. Then I sat, sedulously noticing the blandishments of the elements from the shadow of a canopy under which the Nawab and his friends played cut-throat bridge.

By ten o'clock we had crossed the lake to Bandipur, a dull, insignificant little village on the road to Gilgit, the last stronghold of British Indian power, before the earth ventures out into the deserts of Central Asia, uncharted except by shepherds till the Soviets brought the steel plough of prosperity there.

The Nawab here ordered the Tehsildar to bring him ten chickens, five dozen eggs and some fruit for our *delectation*⁵. And he took us about to the dirty houses of the village to show us off, or rather to show himself off, to the poor inhabitants of the township.

Our boatman came running and said that we should hurry because he wanted to row us across the middle of the lake before noon, as a squall generally arose in the Wullar every day at noon and it was likely to upset the boat if the vessel hadn't already crossed the danger zone before midday. The Nawab abused him in Kashmiri.

We pressed the boatman's point, and since His Grace could not swear at us, he would get a man on *begar* (forced labour) to help the boatman and his family to row across the lake more quickly, and he tarried.

The boatman came again after half an hour and found us all waiting impatiently for the Nawab's return from a visit to the lavatory : His Grace had suddenly thought it fit to have a hair-cut and a Turkish bath in a *hamam*, and he didn't care what happened to us. When he did emerge from his ablutions, and heard not only the insistent appeals of the boatman, but our urgent recommendations, he, as a mark of his favour, clemency, or whatever you may call it, forthwith stopped a young man of the village who was walking along the cobbled high street and ordered him to proceed to our boat and help to row it to Srinagar.

"But Srinagar is fifty miles away, Sire," said the young man, "and my mother has died. I am on the way to attend to her funeral."

"Swine, dare you refuse?" snarled the Nawab. "You are a liar!" "No, Nawab Sahib," said the man, joining his hands, "You are like God in mercy and goodness. Please forgive me. I am footsore and weary after a twentymile march in the mountains where I went to fetch my uncle's donkey. And now my mother has died and I must see the Mullah about securing a place for her burial."

"Run, run towards the boat," bawled the Nawab, "or I'll have you flogged by the Thanedar. Do you

not know that this is the kingdom of which I am a nobleman. And you can't refuse to do *begar*."

"But, Sarkar....." murmured the young Kashmiri, his lips trembling with the burden of a protest which could not deliver itself in the Nawab's face, which glistened not only with the aura of light that the barber's massage had produced but with the anger which the man's disobedience had called forth.

"Go to the boat, son of an ass!" shouted the Nawab and raised his hand.

At the mere suggestion of the Nawab's threat to strike, the young man began to cry, a cry which seemed childish and ridiculous in so grown-up a person, particularly because there were no tears in his large, brown, wide-awake eyes. And he moaned: "Oh, my mother! Oh, my mother!" mechanically, in a voice which seemed to express more the cowardice of the Kashmiri who has been bred by the oppression of one brutal conqueror after another, than his very own real hurt.

But the Nawab was too thick-skinned to see the hurt in the man's soul. He looked at the big eyes weeping without tears and heard the shrill crescendo of his cry, and began to laugh."

"Let us leave him, Nawab Sahib," we said. "We will give the boatman a hand and row across the lake to safety if we hurry."

"Wait, wait," the Nawab said, as he caught hold of the man by his left ear and, laughing, dragged him towards the boat.

The *begari*, who had begun to cry at the mere suggestion of a threat, howled the heavens down at the

actual impact of the Nawab's hand on his body, while the Nawab, who had only laughed derisively at first now chuckled with hoarse laughter which flushed his cheeks.

The man extricated his ear from the Nawab's grasp as we were about five yards from the boat, and perhaps because he thought he had annoyed His Grace by so overt an act of disobedience, he knelt down at his feet and, still weeping and moaning, joined his hands and began to draw lines on the earth with his nose as a sort of penance for his sin.

At this the Nawab burst into redoubled laughter, so that his face, his body itself, seemed to swell to gigantic proportions and tower above us all.

"Look !" he said, flourishing his hand *histrionically*⁶ without interrupting his laughter.

But the situation, which had been tense enough before, had become very awkward now as the man grovelled in the dust and rolled about, weeping, wailing, whining and moaning and sobbing hysterically with the most abject humility.

"Don't you weep, don't you moan, fool !" said the Nawab, screwing his eyes which were full of the tears of laughter, and he turned to the boatman saying, "Lift the clown from there and put him on the boat."

The boatman obeyed the commands of the Nawab, and His Grace having stepped up to the deck behind the *begari*, we solemnly boarded the vessel.

The *begari* had now presumably half decided to do the work, as, crying his hollow cry and moaning his weird moan, he spat on his hands and took up the oar.

The Nawab, who cast the shadow of his menacing presence on the man, was more amused than ever, and he laughed hysterically, writhing and rumbling so that his two friends caught him in their grasp and laid him to rest under the canopy. He sought to shake them off with the weight of his belly and with the wild flourishing of his hands and the reverberating groans of his speech which came from his round red cheeks, muffled with continuous laughter.

The boat began to move, and as the heart-shaped oars tore the water aside, the *begari* ceased to cry and grieve with the same suddenness with which he had begun.

"Look !" the Nawab bellowed, his hysterical laughing fit ending in a jerky cough which convulsed him as a spark of lightning shakes a cloud with thunder. "Look !" he spluttered and pointed towards the *begari*.

But the balls of his eyes rolled suddenly ; his face flushed ghastly red and *livid* ; his throat, twisting like a hemp rope, gave vent to gasping, whistling noises, and his hand fell limp by his side.

We all rushed towards him.

One of his friends had put his hand on the Nawab's heart, another was stroking his back.

A soft gurgle reverberated from the Nawab's mouth. Then there was the echo of a groan and he fell dead. He had been choked by his fit of laughter.

The boat rolled on across the still waters of the Wullar the way it had come, and we sat in the terrible darkness of our minds, utterly silent, till the *begari* began to cry and moan again : "Oh, my mother ! Oh, my mother !" Mulkh Raj Anand

THE EDITOR

AS long as my wife was alive, I did not pay much attention to Probha. As a matter of fact, I thought a great deal more about Probha's mother than I did of the child herself.

At that time my dealing with her was superficial, limited to a little petting, listening to her lisping chatter, and occasionally watching her laugh and play. As long as it was agreeable to me I used to fondle her, but as soon as it threatened to become tiresome I would surrender her to her mother with the greatest readiness.

At last, on the untimely death of my wife, the child dropped from her mother's arms into mine, and I took her to my heart.

But it is difficult to say whether it was I who considered it my duty to bring up the motherless child with twofold care, or my daughter who thought it her duty to take care of her wifeless father with a superfluity of attention. At any rate, it is a fact that from the age of six she began to assume the role of a housekeeper. It was quite clear that this little girl constituted herself the sole guardian of her father.

I smiled inwardly but surrendered myself completely to her hands. I soon saw that the more inefficient and helpless I was, the better pleased she became. I found that even if I took down my own clothes from the peg, or went to get my own umbrella, she put on such an air of offended dignity

that it was clear that she thought I had usurped her right. Never before had she possessed such a perfect doll as she now had in her father and so she took the keenest pleasure in feeding him, dressing him, and even putting him to bed. Only when I was teaching her the elements of arithmetic or the First Reader had I the opportunity of summoning up my parental authority.

Every now and then the thought troubled me as to where I should be able to get enough money to provide her with a dowry for a suitable bridegroom. I was giving her a good education, but what would happen, if she fell into the hands of an ignorant fool?

I made up my mind to earn money. I was too old to get employment in a Government office, and I had not the influence to get work in a private one. After a good deal of thought I decided that I would write books.

If you make hole in a bamboo tube, it will no longer hold either oil or water, in fact its power of receptivity is lost; but if you blow through it, then, without any expenditure it may produce music. I felt quite sure that the man who is not useful can be ornamental, and he who is not productive in other fields can at least produce literature. Encouraged by this thought, I wrote a *farce*¹. People said it was good, and it was even acted on the stage.

Once having tasted of fame, I found myself unable to stop pursuing it farther. Days and days together I went on writing farces with an agony of determination. Probha would come with her smile, and remind

me gently, "Father, it is time for you to take your bath."

And I would growl out at her: "Go away, go away; can't you see that I am busy now? Don't vex me."

The poor child would leave me, unnoticed, with a face dark like a lamp whose light has been suddenly blown out.

I drove the maid-servants away, and beat the men-servants, and when beggars came and sang at my door I would get up and run after them with a stick. My room being by the side of the street, passers-by would stop and ask me to tell them the way, but I would request them *to go to Jericho*². Alas, no one took it into serious consideration that I was engaged in writing a screaming farce.

Yet I never got money in the measure that I got fun and fame. But that did not trouble me, although in the meantime all the potential bridegrooms were growing up for other brides whose parents did not write farces.

But just then an excellent opportunity came my way. The landlord of a certain village, Jahirgram, started a newspaper, and sent a request that I would become its editor. I agreed to take up the post.

For the first few days I wrote with such fire and zest that people used to point at me when I went out into the street, and I began to feel a brilliant halo about my forehead.

Next to Jahirgram was the village of Ahirgram. Between the landlords of these two villages there

was a constant rivalry and feud. There had been a time when they came to blows not infrequently. But now, since the magistrate had bound them both over to keep the peace, I took the place of the hired ruffians who used to act for one of the rivals. Everyone said that I lived up to the dignity of my position.

My writings were so strong and fiery that Ahirgram could no longer hold up its head. I blackened with my ink the whole of their ancient clan and family.

All this time I had the comfortable feeling of being pleased with myself. I even became fat. My face beamed with the exhilaration of a successful man of genius. I admired my own delightful ingenuity of *insinuation*³, when at some *excruciating*⁴ satire of mine, directed against the ancestry of Ahirgram, the whole of Jahirgram would burst its sides with laughter like an over-ripe melon. I enjoyed myself thoroughly.

But at last Ahirgram started a newspaper. What it published was starkly naked, without a shred of literary urbanity. The language it used was of such undiluted *colloquialism*⁵ that every letter seemed to scream in one's face. The consequence was that the inhabitants of both villages clearly understood its meaning.

But I was hampered in my style by my sense of decency; my subtlety of sarcasm very often made but a feeble impression upon the power of understanding of both my friends and my enemies.

The result was that even when I won decidedly in this war of infamy my readers were not aware of my

victory. At last in desperation I wrote a sermon on the necessity of good taste in literature, but found that I had made a fatal mistake. For things that are solemn offer more surface for ridicule than things that are truly ridiculous. And, therefore, my effort at the moral betterment of my fellow-beings had the opposite effect to that which I had intended.

My employer ceased to show me such attention as he had done. The honour to which I had grown accustomed dwindled in its quantity, and its quality became poor. When I walked in the street people did not go out of their way to carry off the memory of a word with me. They even went so far as to be frivolously familiar in their behaviour towards me—such as slapping my shoulders with a laugh and giving me nicknames.

In the meantime my admirers had quite forgotten the farces which had made me famous. I felt as if I was burnt-out match, charred to its very end.

My mind became so depressed that, no matter how I racked my brains, I was unable to write one line. I seemed to have lost all zest for life.

Probha had now grown afraid of me. She would not venture to approach me unless summoned. She had come to understand that a commonplace doll is a far better companion than a genius of a father who writes comic pieces.

One day I saw that the Ahirgram newspaper, leaving my employer alone for once, had directed its attack on me. Some very ugly *imputations*⁶ had been made against myself. One by one all my friends and

quaintances came and read to me the spiciest bits, laughing heartily. Some of them said, that however one might disagree with the subject-matter, it could not be denied that it was cleverly written. In the course of the day at least twenty people came and said the same thing, with slight variations to break its monotony.

In front of my house there was a small garden. I was walking there in the evening with a mind distracted with pain. When the birds had returned to their nests, and surrendered themselves to the peace of the evening, I understood quite clearly that amongst the birds at any rate there were no writers of journalism, nor did they hold discussions on good taste.

I was thinking only of one thing, namely, what answer I could make. The disadvantage of politeness is that it is not intelligible to all classes of people. So I had decided that my answer must be given in the same strain as the attack. I was not going to allow myself to acknowledge defeat.

Just as I had come to this conclusion, a well-known voice came softly through the darkness of the evening, and immediately afterwards I felt a soft warm touch in the palm of my hand. I was so distracted and absent-minded that even though that voice and touch were familiar to me, I did not realise that I knew them.

But the next moment, when they had left me, the voice sounded in my ear, and the memory of the touch became living. My child had slowly come near

to me once more, and had whispered in my ear, "Father !" but not getting any answer she had lifted my right hand and with it had gently stroked her forehead, and then silently gone back into the house.

For a long time Probha had not called me like that, nor caressed me with such freedom. Therefore it was that to-day at the touch of her love my heart suddenly began to yearn for her.

Going back to the house a little later, I saw that Probha was lying on her bed. Her eyes were half closed, and she seemed to be in pain. She lay like a flower which had dropped on the dust at the end of the day.

Putting my hand on her forehead, I found that she was feverish. Her breath was hot, and her pulse was throbbing.

I realised that the poor child, feeling the first symptoms of fever, had come with her thirsty heart to get her father's love and caresses, while he was trying to think of some stinging reply to be sent to the newspaper.

I sat beside her. The child, without speaking a word, took my hand between her two fever-heated palms, and laid it upon her forehead, lying quite still.

All the numbers of the Jahirgram and Ahirgram papers which I had in the house I burnt to ashes. I wrote no answer to the attack. Never had I felt such joy as I did, when I thus acknowledged defeat.

I had taken the child to my arms when her mother had died, and now, having cremated this rival of her mother, again I took her to my heart.

Rabindranath Tagore.

RIP VAN WINKLE

(A Posthumous Writing of Diedrich Knickerbocker¹)

By Woden, God of Saxons,

From whence comes Wensday, that is Wodensday

Truth is a thing that ever I will keep

Unto *thylke*³ day in which I creep into

My sepulchre

Cartwright

WHOEVER has made a voyage up the *Hudson*³ must remember the *Kaatskill* mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of grey vapours about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have described the light smoke curling up from a village, whose *shingle-roofs*⁴ gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a

little village, of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists, in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good *Peter Stayvesant*⁵ (may he rest in peace!) and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weathercocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple good natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stayvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple good-natured man ; he was, moreover, a kind neighbour, and an obedient hen-pecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstances might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity ; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation, and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermon in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long suffering. A termagant

wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing ; and, if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is that he was a great favourite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their play-things, taught them to fly kites and *shoot marbles*⁶, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them, hanging on the *skirts*⁷ clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity ; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighbourhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labour. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance : for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as *Tartar's lance*⁸ and fish all day without a murmur even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and uphill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbour even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn or building stone fences ; the women of the

village, too, used to employ him to run their errands and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own ; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country ; everything about it went worng, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces ; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabba- ges ; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else ; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some outdoor work to do ; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst conditioned farm in the neighbourhood.

His children too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galli- gaskins, which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat *white bread*⁹ or brown

whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much hen-pecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honourable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods—but what courage can withstand the ever-daring and all besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a side-long glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick

or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village, which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit in the shade through a long, lazy summer's day talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when *by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller.*¹⁰ How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junta were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of

a large tree ; so that the neighbours could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sundial. It is true he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent, and angry puffs, but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds ; and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapour curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even his stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught ; nor was the august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, spared from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair ; and his only alternative, to escape from the labour of the farm and clamour of his wife, was to take the gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, whom he sympathised as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. "Poor Wolf", he would say, "*thy mistress*"¹²

leads thee a dog's life of it ; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee !" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master's face, and if dogs can feel pity, I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favourite sport of squirrel-shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and re-echoed the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene ; evening was gradually advancing ; the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys ; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village, and he heaved a

heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance, hallooing, "Rip Van Winkle ! Rip Van Winkle !" He looked round, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountains. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring through the still evening air, "Rip Van Winkle ! Rip Van Winkle !" — At the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a loud growl, skulked to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him ; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place, but supposing it to be some one of the neighbourhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger's appearance. He was a short, square-built old fellow, with thick bushy hair and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion—a cloth jerkin, strapped round the waist—several pairs of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulder a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this

new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity; and mutually relieving each other they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks, towards which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thundershowers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time, Rip and his companion had laboured on in silence, for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins. They were dressed in a quaint outlandish fashion; some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide's. Their visages, too, were peculiar; one had a large beard, broad face, and small piggish

eyes ; the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugarloaf hat, set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colours. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger high-crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old *Flemish painting*¹² in the parlour of Dominie Van Shaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed, statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling ; they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage which he found had much of the flavour of excellent *Hoillands*¹³. He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another ; and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often that at length his senses were over-powered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes—it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. “Surely” thought Rip, “I have not slept here all night.” He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the woebegone party at *nine-pins*¹⁴—the flagon—Oh ! that flagon ! that wicked flagon !” thought Rip ; “what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle ?”

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean well-oiled fowling piece he found an old *firelock*¹⁵ lying by him, the barrel encrusted with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roysterers of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and, having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have

strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him, and shouted his name, but all in vain ; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and, if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip, "and if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle." With some difficulty he got down into the glen ; he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening ; but to his astonishment, a mountain stream was now foaming down it—leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through the thickest of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grape vines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached the place where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheatre ; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high impenetrable wall, over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor

Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog. He was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice; and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man's perplexities. What was to be done?—the morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and, whenever they cast their eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of his gesture induced Rip, involuntarily, to do the same—when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long.

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his grey beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered; it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen

before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—everything was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely, this was his native village, which he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been. Rip was sorely perplexed. "That flagon last night," thought he, "has addled my poor head sadly!"

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog, that looked like Wolf, was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed—"My very dog," sighed poor Rip, "has forgotten me!"

He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. The desolateness overcame all his connubial fears—he called loudly for his wife and children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silent.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn—but it too was gone. A large

rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, "The Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle." Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red nightcap and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was singular assemblage of stars and stripes—all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe ; but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, *General Washington*¹⁶.

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco smoke instead of the idle speeches ; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean bilious-looking fellow, with his pocket full of handbills, was haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens—elections—members of Congress¹⁷—liberty

—*Bunker's Hill*¹⁸—heroes of *seventy-six*¹⁹—and other words, which were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and an army of women and children at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eyeing him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired on which side he voted. Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and, rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear whether he was *Federal or Democrat*²⁰. Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded, in an austere tone what brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village. "Alas! gentleman," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the king, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst from the bystanders—"A *Tory*²¹, a *Tory*! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!" It was with great difficulty

that the selfimportant man in the cocked hat restored order ; and, having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit, what he came there for, and whom he was seeking. The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbours, who used to keep about the tavern.

"Well—who are they ?—name them."

Rip bethought himself a moment and inquired :

"Where's Nicholas Vedder ?"

There was silence for a little while, when an old man replied in a thin piping voice, "Nicholas Vedder. Why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years ! There was a wooden tombstone in the churchyard that used to tell all about him, but that's rotten and gone too !"

Where's Brom Dutcher ?"

"Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war ; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point—others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony's Nose. I don't know—he never came back again."

"Where's Van Bummel, the schoolmaster ?"

"He went off to the wars, too, was a great Militia general, and is now in Congress."

Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand : war—Congress—Stony Point—he had no courage to ask

after any more friends, but cried out in despair, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" exclaimed two or three, "Oh, to be sure! that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree."

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain: apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded, "Who was he, and what was his name?"

"God knows," exclaimed he, at his wit's end; "I'm not myself—I'm somebody else—that's me yonder—no—that's somebody else got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and everything's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what my name is, or who I am!"

The bystanders began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the grey-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry, "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you

little fool ; the old man won't hurt you." The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind.

"What is your name, my good woman ?" asked he.

"Judith Gardiner."

"And your father's name ?"

"Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since,—his dog came home without him ; but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask ; but he put it with a faltering voice :

"Where's your mother ?"

"Oh, she too had died but a short time since ; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New England pedlar."

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father," cried he—"young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now ! Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle ?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough it is Rip Van Winkle,—it is himself ! Welcome home again, old neighbour—why, where have you been these twenty long years ?"

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbours stared when they heard it ; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighbourhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Kaatskill mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the great Hendrick Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the Half moon ; being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river, and the great city called by his name. That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at nine-pins in a hollow of the mountain and that he himself had

heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her. She had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout cheery farmer for her husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm, but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to everything else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits; he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time; and preferred making friends among the rising generation with whom he soon grew into great favour.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn door, and was revered as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicler of the old times "before the war". It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject of His Majesty George, the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United

States. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of States and empires made but little impression on him; but, there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders and cast up his eyes; which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used so tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighbourhood but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunder-storm of a summer afternoon about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of nine-pins; and it is a common wish of all hen-pecked husbands in the neighbourhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.

Washington Irving.

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

SHE was one of those pretty and charming girls who by some freak of destiny, are born into families that have always held subordinate appointments. Possessing neither dowry nor expectations, she had no hope of meeting some man of wealth and distinction, who would understand her, fall in love with her, and wed her. So she consented to marry a small clerk in the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly, because she could not afford to be elegant, but she felt as unhappy as if she had married beneath her. Women are dependent on neither caste nor ancestry. With them, beauty, grace and charm take the place of birth and breeding. In their case natural delicacy, instinctive refinement and adaptability constitute their claims to aristocracy and raise girls of the lower classes to an equality with the greatest of great ladies. She was eternally restive under the conviction that she had been born to enjoy every refinement and luxury. Depressed by her humble surroundings, the sordid walls of her dwelling, its worn furniture and shabby hangings were a torment to her. Details which another woman of her class would scarcely have noticed, tortured her and filled her with resentment. The sight of her little *Breton*¹ maid-of-all-work roused in her forlorn repinings and frantic yearnings. She pictured to herself silent antechambers, upholstered

with oriental tapestry, lighted by great bronze standard lamps, while two tall footmen in knee breeches slumbered in huge arm-chairs, overcome by the oppressive heat from the stove. She dreamed of spacious drawing-rooms with hangings of antique silk, and beautiful tables laden with priceless ornaments; of fragrant and coquettish boudoirs, exquisitely adapted for afternoon chats with intimate friends, men of note and distinction, whose attentions are coveted by every woman.

She would sit down to dinner at the round table, its cloth already three days old, while her husband seated opposite to her, removed the lid from the *soup tureen*² and exclaimed, "Pot au feu! How splendid! My favourite soup!" But her own thoughts were dallying with the idea of exquisite dinners and shining silver, in rooms whose tapestried walls were gay with antique figures and grotesque birds in fairy forests. She would dream of delicious dishes served on wonderful plates, of soft, whispered nothings, which evoke a sphinx-like smile, while one trifles with the pink flesh of a trout or the *wing of a plump pullet*³.

She had no pretty gowns, no jewels, nothing—and yet she cared for nothing else. She felt that it was for such things as these that she had been born. What joy it would have given her to attract, to charm, to be envied by women, courted by men! She had a wealthy friend, who had been at school at the same convent, but after a time she refused to go and see her, because she suffered so acutely after

each visit. She spent whole days in tears of grief, regret, despair and misery.

One evening her husband returned home in triumph with a large envelope in his hand.

"Here is something for you," he cried.

Hastily she tore open the envelope and drew out a printed card with the following inscription :

"The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame George Ramponneau have the honour to request the company of Monsier and Madame Loisel at an At Home at the Education Office on Monday, January 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she flung the invitation irritably on the table exclaiming :

"What good is that to me ?"

"Why, my dear, I thought you would be pleased. You never go anywhere, and this is a really splendid chance for you. I had no end of trouble in getting it. Everybody is trying to get an invitation. It's very select, and only a few invitations are issued to the clerks, You will see all the officials there."

She looked at him in exasperation, and exclaimed patulantly :

"What do you expect me to wear at a reception like that ?"

He had not considered the matter, but he replied hesitatingly :

"Why, that dress you always wear to the theatre seems to me very nice indeed...."

He broke off. To his horror and consternation he saw that his wife was in tears. "What on earth is the matter?" he gasped.

With a violent effort she controlled her emotion and drying her wet cheeks said in a calm voice :

"Nothing. Only I haven't a frock, and so I can't go to the reception. Give your invitation to some friend in your office, whose wife is better dressed than I am."

He was greatly distressed.

"Let us talk it over, Matilda. How much do you think a proper frock would cost, something quite simple that would come in useful other occasions afterwards?"

She considered the matter for a few moments, busy with her calculations, and wondering how large a sum she might venture to name without the little clerk's instincts of economy and provoking a prompt refusal.

"I hardly know," she said at last, doubtfully, "but I think I could manage with four hundred francs."

He turned a little pale. She had named the exact sum that he had saved for buying a gun and making up Sunday shooting parties the following summer with some friends, who were going to shoot larks in the plain of Nanterre.

But he replied :

"Very well, I'll give you four hundred francs. But mind you buy a really handsome gown."

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The day of the party drew near. But although her gown was finished, Madame Loisel seemed depressed and dissatisfied.

"What is the matter?" asked her husband one evening. "You have not been at all yourself the last three days."

She answered: "It vexes me to think that I haven't any jewellery to wear, not even a brooch. I shall feel like a perfect pauper. I would almost rather not go to the party."

"You can wear some fresh flowers. They are very fashionable this year. For ten francs you can get two or three splendid roses."

She was not convinced.

"No, there is nothing more humiliating than to have an air of poverty among a crowd of rich women."

"How silly you are!" exclaimed her husband. "Why don't you ask your friend, Madame Forestier, to lend you some jewellery? You know her quite well enough for that."

She uttered a cry of joy.

"Yes, of course, it never occurred to me."

The next day she paid her friend a visit and explained her predicament.

Madame Forestier went to her wardrobe, took out a large jewel-case and placed it open before her friend.

"Help yourself, my dear."

Madame Loisel saw some bracelets, a pearl necklace, a Venetian cross exquisitely worked in

gold and jewels. She tried on these ornaments in front of the mirror and hesitated, reluctant to take them off and give them back.

"Have you nothing else? she kept asking.

"O yes, look for yourself. I don't know what you would prefer."

At length she discovered a black-satin case containing a superb diamond necklace, and her heart began to beat with frantic desire. With trembling hands she took it out, fastened it over her high-necked gown, and stood gazing at herself in rapture.

Then in an agony of doubt she said:

"Will you lend me this? I shouldn't want anything else."

"Yes, certainly."

She threw her arms round her friend's neck, kissed her effusively, and then fled with her treasure.

It was the night of the reception. Madame Loisel's triumph was complete. All smiles and graciousness, in her exquisite gown, she was the prettiest woman in the room. Her head was in a whirl of joy. The men stared at her and inquired her name and begged for an introduction, while the junior staff asked her for waltzes. She even attracted the attention of the minister himself.

Carried away by her enjoyment, glorying in her beauty and her success, she threw herself ecstatically into the dance. She moved as in a beautiful dream, wherein were mingled all the homage and admiration she had evoked, all the desires she had kindled, all that complete and perfect triumph so dear to a woman's heart.

It was close on four before she could tear herself away. Ever since midnight her husband had been dozing in a little deserted drawing-room together with three other men, whose wives were enjoying themselves immensely.

He threw her outdoor wraps round her shoulder—unpretentious, everyday garments, whose shabbiness contrasted strangely with the elegance of her ball dress. Conscious of the incongruity, she was eager to be gone, in order to escape the notice of the other women in their luxurious furs. Loisel tried to restrain her.

"Wait here while I fetch a cab. You will catch cold outside."

But she would not listen to him, and hurried down the staircase. They went out into the street, but there was no cab to be seen. They continued their search vainly hailing drivers, whom they caught sight of in the distance. Shivering with cold and in desperation, they made their way towards the *Seine*⁴. At last, on the quay, they found one of those old vehicles which are only seen in Paris after nightfall, as if ashamed to display their shabbiness by daylight.

The cab took them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and they gloomily climbed the stairs to their dwelling. All was over for her. As for him, he was thinking that he would have to be in the office by ten o'clock.

She took off her wraps in front of the mirror, for the sake of one last glance at herself in all her glory.

But suddenly she uttered a cry. The diamonds were no longer round her neck.

"What is the matter?" asked her husband, who was already half undressed.

"I...I...have lost Madame Forestier's necklace."

He stared in dismay. "What? Lost the necklace? Impossible."

They searched the pleats of the gown, the folds of the cloak and all the pockets, but in vain.

"You are sure you had it on, when you came away from the ball?"

Yes, I remember feeling it in the lobby at the Education office."

"But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard a drop. It must be in the cab."

"Yes, I expect it is. Did you take the number?"

"No. Did you?"

"No."

They gazed at each other, utterly appalled. In the end, Loisel put on his clothes again.

"I will go over the ground that we covered on foot and see if I cannot find it."

He left the house. Lacking the strength to go to bed, unable to think, she collapsed into a chair and remained there in her evening gown, without a fire.

About seven o'clock her husband returned. He had not found the diamonds.

He applied to the police; advertised a reward in the newspapers, made inquiries of all the hackney-cab offices; he visited every place that seemed to hold out a vestige of hope.

His wife waited all day long in the same distracted condition, overwhelmed by this appalling calamity.

Loisel returned home in the evening, pale and hollowcheeked. His efforts had been in vain.

"You must write to your friend," he said, "and tell her that you have broken the catch of the necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to think things over."

She wrote a letter to his dictation.

After a week had elapsed, they gave up all hope. Loisel, who looked five years older, said :

"We must take steps to replace the diamonds."

On the following day they took the empty case to the jeweller, whose name was inside the lid. He consulted his books.

"The necklace was not bought here, Madam ; I can only have supplied the case."

They went from jeweller to jeweller, in an endeavour to find a necklace exactly like the one they had lost, comparing their recollections. Both of them were ill with grief and despair.

At last in a shop in the *Palais Royal*⁵ they found a diamond necklace, which seemed to them exactly like the other. Its price was forty thousand francs. The jeweller agreed to sell it to them for thirty-six. They begged him not to dispose of it for three days, and they stipulated for the right to sell it back for thirty-four thousand francs, if the original necklace was found before the end of February.

Loisel had eighteen thousand francs left to him by his father. The balance of the sum he proposed to

borrow. He raised loans in all quarters, a thousand franc from one man, five hundred from another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave promissory notes, agreed to exorbitant terms, had dealings with usurers, and with all the money-lending hordes. He compromised his whole future, and had to risk his signature, hardly knowing if he would be able to honour it. Overwhelmed by the prospect of future suffering, the black misery which was about to come upon him, the physical privations and moral torments, he went to fetch the new necklace, and laid his thirty-six thousand francs down on the jeweller's counter.

When Madame Loisel brought back the necklace, Madame Forestier said reproachfully :

"You ought to have returned it sooner ; I might have wanted to wear it."

To Madame Loisel's relief she did not open the case. Supposing she had noticed the exchange, what would she have thought ? What would she have said ? Perhaps she would have taken her for a thief.

Madame Loisel now became acquainted with the horrors of extreme poverty. She made up her mind to it, and played her part heroically. This appalling debt had to be paid, and pay it she would. The maid was dismissed, the flat was given up, and they moved to a garret. She undertook all the rough household work and the odious duties of the kitchen. She washed up after meals and ruined her pink fingernails scrubbing greasy dishes and saucepans. She washed the linen, the shirts and the dusters, and

hung them out on the line to dry. Every morning she carried down the sweepings to the street, and brought up the water, pausing for breath at each landing. Dressed like a working woman, she went with her basket on her arm to the greengrocer, the grocer and the butcher, bargaining, wrangling and fighting for every farthing.

Each month some of the promissory notes had to be redeemed, and others renewed, in order to gain time.

Her husband spent his evenings working at some tradesman's accounts and at night he would often copy papers at five sous a page.

This existence went on for ten years.

At the end of that time they had paid off everything to the last penny, including the usurious rate and the accumulations of interest.

Madame Loisel now looked an old woman. She had become the typical poor man's wife, rough, coarse, hardbitten. Her hair was neglected; her skirts hung awry; and her hands were red. Her voice was no longer gentle, and she washed down the floors vigorously. But now and then, when her husband was at the office, she would sit by the window, and her thoughts would wander back to that far-away evening, the evening of her beauty and her triumph.

What would have been the end of it if she had not lost the necklace? Who could say? Who could say? How strange, how variable are the chances of life? How small a thing can serve to save or ruin you!

One Sunday she went for a stroll in the *Champs Elysees*⁵ for the sake of relaxation after the week's work and she caught sight of a lady with a child. She recognised Madame Forestier, who looked as young, as pretty, and as attractive as ever. Madame Loisel felt a thrill of emotion. Should she speak to her? Why not? Now that the debt was paid, why should she not tell her the whole story? She went up to her.

"Good morning, Jeanne."

Her friend did not recognise her and was surprised at being addressed so familiarly by this homely person.

"I am afraid I do not know you—you must have made a mistake," she said hesitatingly.

"No. I am Matilda Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry:

"O my poor, dear Matilda, how you have changed!"

"Yes, I have been through a very hard time since I saw you last, no end of trouble, and all through you."

"Through me? What do you mean?"

You remember the diamond necklace you lent me to wear at the reception at the Education Office?"

"Yes, Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"I don't understand; you brought it back to me."

"What I brought you back was another one, exactly like it. And for ~~the~~ last ten years we have

been paying for it. You will understand that it was not an easy matter for people like us, who hadn't a penny. However, it's all over now. I can't tell you what a relief it is."

Madame Forestier stopped dead.

"You mean to say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes. And you never noticed it? They were certainly very much alike."

She smiled with the ingenuous pride of satisfaction.

Madame Forestier seized both her hands in great distress.

"O my poor, dear Matilda! Why, mine were only imitation. At the most they were worth five hundred francs!"

Guy De Maupassant

AN UNPREJUDICED GIRL

MAXIM Kuzmitch Saliutov was tall, broad-shouldered and stately. His build could be described with confidence as athletic. His strength was enormous. He could bend a *twenty-copeck piece*¹, tear a young tree up by the roots, he could lift a weight with his teeth, and swore that there was not a man on earth who could dare to wrestle with him. He was brave and bold. On the other hand, everybody was afraid of him, and grew pale when he was angry. Men and women screamed and got red when he pressed their hands; it was painful! His fine *baritone voice*² could not be heard, because he deafened you..... A powerful man! I don't know another like him.

And this prodigious, superhuman, bovine strength appeared as nothing—like a crushed rat—when Maxim Kuzmitch proposed to Elena Gavrilovna! Maxim Kuzmitch grew pale, blushed, trembled and was unable even to lift a chair when he had to squeeze out of his large mouth: "I love you!" His strength vanished, and his huge body was transformed into a big empty vessel.

He proposed on the skating *rink*³. She flew over the ice with the lightness of a feather and he pursuing her trembled, whispered and almost fainted. Suffering was written on his face—His skilful, agile legs bent and faltered when he had to cut some

intricate figure on the ice...Do you think he feared a refusal? No. Elena Gavrilovna loved him and longed for the offer of his hand and heart. She a small, pretty brunette, was ready at any moment to be consumed with impatience... He was thirty years old, his rank was not high, he had not much money, but he was handsome, witty, adroit. He was an excellent dancer, a splendid shot... Nobody rode better than he did. Once when walking with her, he jumped over a ditch which would have been difficult for any English race-horse.

It was impossible not to love such a man !

He knew that he was loved. He was sure of it. He suffered from one thought...That thought stifled his brain, drove him mad, made him cry and prevented him from drinking, eating and sleeping...It poisoned his life. He swore that he loved her, and at that very moment it agitated his brain and made his temples throb.

"Will you be my wife?" he said to Elena Gavrilovna. "I love you ! Madly ! Passionately !"

And at that very moment he thought :

"Have I the right to be her husband? No, I have not. If she only knew my extraction, if anybody told her of my past, she would give me a box on the ear. A disgraceful, an unfortunate past. She, illustrious, rich, well-educated, would despise me, if she only knew what sort of a bird I am."

When Elena Gavrilovna threw herself on his neck and swore that she loved him, he did not feel happy.

His thoughts poisoned everything...When he was returning home from the skating rink he bit his lips and thought :

"I'm a scoundrel. If I were an honest man, I would tell her everything—everything ! Before proposing I ought to have confided my secret to her, but I did not do so. Therefore I am a blackguard and a scoundrel."

Elena Gavrilovana's parents consented to her marriage with Maxim Kuzmitch. They liked the athlete. He was deferential and he had good prospects as a government official. Elena Gavrilovna was in the seventh heaven. She was happy. For all that the poor athlete was far from happy. Until the very wedding day he was tormented by the same thoughts he had had when he proposed.....

One of his friends, who knew all his past as well as his five fingers, troubled him too. He was obliged to give his friend nearly the whole of his salary.

"Treat me to dinner at *The Hermitage*⁴," his friend said, "or I'll tell everybody—And lend me twenty-five roubles."

Poor Maxim Kuzmitch grew thin and emaciated... His cheeks were sunken, his fists became veined. His thought made him ill. If it had not been for the beloved girl, he would have shot himself.....

"I am a scoundrel, a blackguard," he kept thinking. "I must explain everything to her before the wedding. Let her disdain me !"

But he did not explain before the wedding : he had not the courage.

And the thought that after the explanation he would have to part from that beloved girl, was the most terrible of all his thoughts.

The wedding evening arrived. The young couple were married, congratulated and everybody was amazed at their happiness. Poor Maxim Kuzmitch accepted the congratulations, drank, danced and laughed, but was terribly unhappy.

"I'm a beast ; but I will force myself to explain everything. We have been married, but it is still not too late. We can part "

And he explained.

When the desired hour arrived and the young couple were conducted to the nuptial chamber, his conscience and his honesty triumphed...Pale, trembling, hardly breathing and forgetting their relationship, Maxim Kuzmitch came up to her timidly and taking her hand said :

"Before we belong...to each other.....I must.....explain something . "

"What is the matter with you, Max ? You are pale. All these days you have been pale, silent. Are you ill ?"

"I...must tell you everything. Lelya, let us sit down. I must astonish you, I must poison your whole happiness...but what am I to do ? Duty comes before everything. I will tell you all about my past..."

Lelya opened her eyes very wide and smiled.

"Well, tell it me then.. only quicker, please, and don't tremble so."

"I was b-b-born in Tam-tam-bov.....My parents were undistinguished and terribly poor...I will tell you what sort of a bird I am. You will be terrified. Stop—you will—I was a beggar.....As a boy I sold apples.. pears..."

"You did?"

"You are horrified? But, my dear, that is not so horrible. Oh, how wretched I am? You will curse me when you know."

"But what is it?"

"For twenty years.....I was.....was.....forgive me—don't drive me away from you—I was a clown in a circus!"

"You! A clown!"

Saliutov expecting his ears boxed, covered his pale face with his hands. He was almost fainting.

"You—a clown?"

Lelya fell off the couch—jumped up and ran off.

What was the matter with her? She caught hold of her stomach, began running about the bedroom, filling the room with peals of laughter that resembled hysteria.

"Ha-ha-ha.....You were a clown!.....You? Maximka! Golubtchik! Perform something! Prove that you were one! Ha-ha-ha! Golubtchik!"

She rushed at Saliutov and threw her arms round him.

"Perform something! My darling! Golubtchik."

"Unhappy girl, you laugh? You despise me?"

"Do something! Were you a rope-walker too?"

"Come now!"

She covered her husband's face with kisses, she nestled up close to him. She coaxed him. It did not appear as if she were angry. He, quite unable to understand it, but happy, acquiesced in his wife's request.

Going up to the bed he counted three and stood on his head resting it on the edge of the bed.

"Bravo, Max ! Bis ! Ha-ha ! Golubtchik ! Again !"

Max shook slightly, jumped from the bed in the same position and began walking about the room on his hands.

In the morning Lelya's parents were terribly surprised,

"Who can be knocking in that way upstairs ?" they asked each other—"the young couple are still asleep. It must be the servants playing pranks. How they are *romping*⁵ ! What *scamps*⁶ !"

Papasha went upstairs, but did not find any servants there.

To his great astonishment the noise came from the young couple's room...He stood some time at the door, shrugged his shoulders and then opened it a little. Peeping into the bed-room through the chink he shrunk back and almost died from astonishment : in the middle of the room Maxim Kuzmitch was making the most desperate *salte mortale*⁷ in the air. Lelya was standing near him clapping her hands. Both their faces were radiant with happiness.

Anton Chekov

HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN REQUIRE ?

AN elder sister came from the town to visit a younger one. The elder one was married to a tradesman, and the younger to a peasant. As the two drank tea and talked the elder sister began to boast and make much of her life in town—how she lived and went about in ease and comfort, dressed her children well, had nice things to eat and drink, and went skating, walking, and to the theatre.

The younger sister was vexed at this, and retorted by running down the life of a tradesman's wife and exalting her own country one.

"For my part, I should not care to exchange my life for yours," she said. "I grant you ours is an uneventful existence and that we know no excitement ; yet you, on the other hand, with all your fine living must either do a very large trade indeed or be ruined. You know the proverb 'Loss is Gain's elder brother.' Well, you may be rich to-day, but to-morrow you may find yourself in the street. We have a better way than that here in the country. The peasant's stomach may be thin, but it is long. That is to say, he may never be rich, yet, he will always have enough."

The elder sister took her up quickly.

"Enough, indeed ?" she retorted. "'Enough'—with nothing but your wretched pigs and calves ? 'Enough'—with no fine dresses or company ? Why

however hard your man may work, you have to live in mud, and will die there...yes, and your children after you."

"Oh, no," replied the younger. "It's like this with us. Though we may live hardly, the land is at least our own, and we have no need to bow and scrape to anyone. But you in town—you live in an atmosphere of scandal. To-day all may be well with you, but to-morrow the evil eye may look upon you, and your husband find himself tempted away by cards or wine, and you and yours find yourselves ruined. Is it not so?"

Pakhom, the younger sister's husband, had been listening near the stove.

"That is true," he said, "I have been turning over our mother earth since childhood, so have had no time to get any foolishness into my head. Yet I have one grievance—too little land. Only give me land, and I fear no man—no, not even the Devil himself."

The two women finished their tea, chattered a little longer about dress, washed up the crockery, and went to bed.

All this time the Devil had been sitting behind the stove, and had heard everything. He was delighted when the peasant's wife led her husband on to brag—led him on to boast that, once given land, not even the Devil himself should take it from him.

"Splendid!" thought the Devil. "I will try a fall with you. I will give you much land—and then take it away again."

Near these peasants there lived a lady land-owner, with a small property of 120 *dessiatins*¹. Formerly she had got on well with the peasants and in no way abused her rights ; but she now took as overseer a retired soldier, who began to persecute the peasants with fines. No matter how careful Pakhom might be, one of his horses would get into the lady's oats, or a cow stray into her garden, or the calves break into her meadows: and for all these things there would be fines levied.

Pakhom paid up, and then beat and abused his household. Much trouble did he get into with the overseer for the doings of the summer, so that he felt devoutly thankful to have got his cattle standing in the straw-yard again. He regretted the cost of their keep there, yet it cost him less anxiety in other ways.

That winter a rumour went abroad that the *Barina*² was going to sell her land, and that the overseer was arranging to buy both it and the highway rights attached . This rumour reached the peasants, and they were dismayed.

"If," they thought, "the overseer gets the land he will worry us with fines even worse than he did under the Barina. We must get hold of the property somehow, as we all live round it in a circle."

So a deputation from the *Mir*³ went to see the Barina, and besought her not to sell the land to the overseer, but to give them the refusal of it, and they would outbid their rival. To this the Barina agreed, and the peasants set about arranging for the Mir to purchase the whole of her estate. They held a meeting about it, and yet another one, but the matter

did not go through. The fact was that the Unclean One always defeated their object by making them unable to agree. Then the peasants decided to try and buy the land in separate lots, each man as much as he could ; and to this also the Barina said she was agreeable. Pakhom heard one day that a neighbour had bought twenty dessiatins and that the Barina had agreed to let half the purchase money stand over for a year. Pakhom grew envious. "If," he thought, "the others buy up all the land, I shall feel left out in the cold." So he took counsel of his wife. "Everybody is buying some," he said, "so we too had better get hold of ten dessiatins. We cannot make a living as things are now, for the overseer takes it all out of us in fines." So they took thought how to effect the purchase.

They had 100 roubles laid by ; so that by selling a foal and half their bees, in addition to putting out their son to service, they managed to raise half the money.

Pakhom collected it all together, selected fifteen dessiatins and a small piece of timber land, and went to the Barina to arrange things. The bargain struck, they shook hands upon it, and Pakhom paid a deposit. Then he went to town, completed the conveyance (half the purchase money to be paid now, and half within two years' time)—and lo ! Pakhom was a landowner ! He also borrowed a small sum of his brother-in-law, wherewith to purchase seed. This he duly sowed in his newly acquired property, and a fine crop came up ; so that within a year he had re-

paid both the Barina and his brother-in-law. He was now an absolute proprietor. It was his own land that he sowed, his own hay that he reaped, his own firewood that he cut and his own cattle that he grazed. Whenever he rode out to his inalienable estate, either to plough or to inspect the crops and meadows, he felt overjoyed. The very grass seemed to him different to other grass, the flowers to bloom differently. Once, when he had ridden over his land, it was just—land ; but now, although still land, it was land with a difference.

Thus did Pakhom live for a time ; and was happy. Indeed, all would have been well if only the other peasants had left Pakhom's corn and pasture alone. In vain did he make repeated remonstrance. Shepherds would turn their flocks out into his meadows, and horses would somehow get into the corn at night. Again and again Pakhom drove them out and overlooked the matter, but at last he lost his temper and laid a complaint before the district court. He knew that the peasants only did it from lack of land, not maliciously ; yet it could not be allowed, since they were eating the place up. He must teach them a lesson.

So he taught first one of them a lesson in court, and then another ; had one fined, and then a second. This aroused feeling against him, and his neighbours now began to set purpose, to steal his crops. One man got into the plantation at night, and stripped the bark of no less than ten linden trees. When Pakhom next rode that way and saw what had been

done he turned tale. He drew nearer and perceived that bark had been stripped off and thrown about, and trunks uprooted. One tree only had the miscreant left, after lopping all its branches, but the rest he had cleared entirely in his evil progress. Pakhom was furious. "Ah!" he thought, "If only I knew who had done this, I could soon get my own back on him!" He wondered and wondered who it could be. If any one in particular, it must be Semka. So he went to see Semka but got nothing out of him except bad language: yet he felt more certain than ever now that it was Semka who had done it. He laid a complaint against him, and they were both of them summoned to attend the court. The magistrates sat and sat, and then dismissed the case for want of evidence. This enraged Pakhom still more. He abused both *Starshina*⁴ and the magistrates. "You magistrates," he said, "are in league with thieves. If you were honest men you would never have acquitted Semka." Yes, there was no doubt that Pakhom was ill pleased both with the magistrates and with his neighbours. He began to live more and more apart on his land, and to have less and less to do with the Mir.

At this time there arose a rumour that some of the peasantry thereabouts were thinking of emigrating. This made Pakhom think to himself: "But there is no reason why I should leave my land, If some of the others go, why, it will make all the more room for me. I can buy up their land, and so hedge myself in all round. I should live much more comfortably then. At present I am too cramped."

It happened soon afterwards that Pakhom was sitting at home one day, when a travelling peasant dropped in. Pakhom gave him a night's lodging and a meal, and then questioned him, in the course of conversation, as to whence in the name of God he had come. To this the peasant replied that he had come from lower down the river—from a spot beyond the Volga, where he had been in service. Then he went on to relate how a settlement was being formed there, every settler being enrolled in the Mir and allotted ten dessiatins of land. It was *such* land, too, he said and grew *such* rye! Why the straw of the rye was tall enough to hide a horse, and thick enough together to make a sheaf per five handfuls! One peasant, he went on, who had arrived there a poor man and had had nothing but his two hands to work with, now grew his fifty dessiatins of wheat. Indeed, during the past year that man had made 5,000 roubles by his wheat alone!

Pakhom's soul was fired by this, and he thought to himself: "Why should I stay here, poor and cramped up, when I might be making such a fine living as that? I will sell out—both land and homestead—and go and build myself a new house and farm there with the money. Here, in this cramped-up spot, life is one long worry. At any rate, I might take a trip there and make inquiries."

So when the summer came he got himself ready and set out. He took a steamer down the Volga to Samara, and thence tramped 400 *versts*⁵ till he came to the place. It was all as had been described. The

peasants lived splendidly, with ten dessiatins of free land to each soul, and he was assured of a welcome by the Mir. Moreover, he was told that anyone who came there with money could buy additional land—as much as ever he wanted—right out and in perpetuity. For three roubles a dessiatin a man could have the very finest land possible, and to any extent.

All this Pakhom learnt, and then returned home in the autumn. He began straightway to sell out, and succeeded in disposing both of land, buildings, and stock at a profit. Then he took his name off the Mir's books, waited for the spring, and departed to the new place with his family.

They duly arrived at their destination, and Pakhom was forthwith enrolled in the Mir of the great settlement (after moistening the elders' throats, of course, and executing the necessary documents). Then they took him and assigned him fifty dessiatins of land—ten for each soul of his family—in different parts of the estate, in addition to common patronage. Pakhom built himself a homestead and stocked it, his allotted land alone being twice what he had formerly possessed in the old place. It was corn-bearing land, too. Altogether life was ten times better here than where he had come from for he had at his disposal both arable and pasture land—sufficient of the latter always to keep as many cattle as he cared to have.

At first while building and stocking, he thought everything splendid. Later, when he had settled down a bit, he began to feel cramped again. He wanted to grow white Turkish wheat as several

others did, but there was hardly any wheat-bearing land among his five allotments. Wheat needed to be grown on grass, new, or fallow land, and such land had to be sown one year and left fallow for two, in order that the grass might grow again. True, he had as much soft land as he wanted, but it would only bear rye. Wheat required hard land, and hard land found many applicants and there was not enough at all. Moreover, such land gave rise to disputes. The richer peasants sowed their own, but the poorer had to mortgage theirs to merchants. The first year, Pakhom sowed his allotments with wheat, and got splendid crops. Then he wanted to sow them with wheat again, but they were not large enough to admit both of sowing new land and of leaving last year's land to lie fallow. He must get hold of some more. So he went to a merchant, and took a year's lease of some wheat land. He sowed as much of it as he could, and reaped a magnificent crop. Unfortunately however, the land was a long way from the settlement—in fact, the crop had to be carted fifteen versts; so, as Pakhom had seen merchant farmers living in fine homesteads and growing rich in the district where the land lay, he thought to himself: "How would it be if I took a longer lease of it and built a homestead there the same as they have done? Then I should be right on the land." So he set about arranging to do so.

Thus did Pakhom live for five years, continually taking up land and sowing it with wheat. All the years were good ones, the wheat thrived, and the money came in. Yet just to live and live was rather

tedious, and Pakhom began to tire of leasing land every year in a strange district and removing his stock there. Wherever there was a particularly good plot of land there would be rush made for it by other peasants, and it would be divided up before he was ready to lease and sow it as a whole. Once he went shares with a merchant in leasing a plot of pasturage of some peasants and ploughed it up. Then the peasants lost it in a law-suit, and his labour went for nothing. If only it had been his own land, absolutely, he need have given in to no one and been put no trouble.

So he began to cast about where he could buy an estate outright. In this endeavour he fell in with a certain peasant who had ruined himself and was ready to let him have his property of 500 dessiatins cheap. Pakhom entered into negotiations with him, and, after much discussion, closed at 1,000 roubles—half down, and half to stand over. One day after they had thus clinched the matter, a merchant drove up to Pakhom's homestead to bait his horses. They drank a tea-pot empty and talked. The merchant said he had come a long long way, from the country of the Bashkirs; in fact, where (so he said) he had just purchased 5,000 dessiatins for only 1,000 roubles! Pakhom went on to question him further, and the merchant to answer. "All I did," said the latter, "was to make the elders there a few presents (*Khalats*⁶, carpets, and a chest of tea), to distribute about a hundred roubles, and to stand vodka to anyone who felt inclined for it. In the result I got the

land for twenty copeks a dessiatin," and he showed Pakhom the deed. "The property," he concluded, "fronts upon a river, and is all of it open, grass, steppe land." Pakhom questioned him still further.

"You would not," went on the merchant, "find such land as that in a year. The same with all Bashkir land. Moreover the people there are as simple as sheep. You can get things out of them absolutely for nothing."

"Well," thought Pakhom; "what is the good of my giving 1,000 roubles for only 5,000 dessiatins, and still leaving a debt round my neck, when there I might become a proprietor indeed for the same money?"

Pakhom inquired of the merchant as to how to reach the country of the Bashkirs, and as soon as his informant had departed, got ready for the journey. Leaving his wife at home, and taking with him only his workman, he set out first for the town, where he bought a chest of tea, vodka, and other gifts, as the merchant had advised. Then the two drove on and on until they had covered 500 versts, and on the seventh day arrived at the camp of the Bashkirs. Everything turned out to be as the merchant had said. The people there lived in hide-tilted wagons, which were drawn up by the side of a river running through the open steppe. They neither ploughed the land nor ate corn, while over the steppe wandered droves of cattle and Cossack horses, the foals being tied to the backs of the wagons and their dams driven up to them twice a day to give them milk. The chief sustenance of the people was mare's milk, which the

women made into a drink called kumiss, and then churned the kumiss into cheese. In fact, the only drink the Bashkirs knew was either kumiss or tea, their only solid food mutton, and their only amusement pipe-playing. Nevertheless they all of them looked sleek and cheerful, and kept holiday the whole year round. In education they were sadly deficient, and knew no Russian, but were kindly and attractive folk for all that.

As soon as they caught sight of Pakhom they came out of their wagons and surrounded the guest. An interpreter was found, and Pakhom told him that he had come to buy land. At once the people were delighted, and embracing Pakhom fervently, escorted him to a well-appointed wagon, where they made him sit down on a pile of rugs topped with soft cushions, and set about getting some tea and kumiss ready. A sheep was killed, and a meal served of the mutton, after which Pakhom produced the gifts from his *tarantass*⁷, distributed them round, and shared out also the tea. Then the Bashkirs fell to talking among themselves for a while and finally bade the interpreter speak.

"I am to tell you," said the interpreter, "that they are greatly taken with you, and that it is our custom to meet the wishes of a guest in every possible way, in return for the presents given us. Since, therefore, you have given us presents, say now what there is of ours which you may desire, so that we may grant it you."

"What I particularly desire" replied Pakhom, "is some of your land. Where I come from," he

continued, "there is not enough land, and what there is is ploughed out, whereas you have much land, and good land such as I have never before beheld."

The interpreter translated, and the Bashkirs talked again among themselves. Although Pakhom could not understand what they were saying, he could see that they kept crying out something in merry tones and then bursting into laughter. At last they stopped and looked at Pakhom, while the interpreter spoke.

"I am to tell you," he said, "that in return for your kindness we are ready to sell you as much land as you may wish. Merely make a gesture with your hand to signify how much and it shall be yours."

At this point, however, the people began to talk among themselves again and to dispute about something. On Pakhom asking what it was, the interpreter told him: "Some of them say that the Starshina ought to be asked first about the land, and that nothing should be done without him, while others say that that is not necessary."

Suddenly, while the Bashkirs were thus disputing, there entered the wagon with a man in a foxskin cap at whose entry everyone rose; while the interpreter said to Pakhom: "This is the Starshina himself." At once Pakhom caught up the best Khalat and offered it to the newcomer, as well as five pounds of tea. The Starshina duly accepted them, and then sat down in the place of honour, while the Bashkirs began to expound to him some matter or another. He listened, and listened, then gave a smile, and spoke to Pakhom in Russian.

"Very well," he said, "Pray choose your land wheresoever it pleases you. We have much land."

"So I am to take as much as I want," thought Pakhom to himself. "Still, I must strengthen that bargain somehow. They might say, 'The land is yours, and then take it away again.'"

"I thank you," he said aloud, "for your kind speech. As you say, you have much land, whereas I am in need of some. I only desire to know precisely which of it is to be mine; wherefore it might be well to measure it off by some method and duly convey it to me. God only is lord of life and death, and, although you are good people who now give it to me, it might befall that your children would take it away again."

The Starshina smiled.

"The conveyance," he said, "is already executed. This present meeting is our mode of confirming it—and it could not be a surer one."

"But," said Pakhom, "I have been told, that a merchant visited you recently, and that you sold him land and gave him a proper deed of conveyance. Pray, therefore, do the same with me."

The Starshina understood now,

"Very well," he replied. "We have a writer here, and will go to a town and procure the necessary seals."

"But what is your price for the land?" asked Pakhom.

"Our price," answered the Starshina, "is only 1,000 roubles per day."

Pakhom did not understand this day-rate at all.

"How many dessiatins would that include?" he inquired presently.

"We do not reckon in that way," said the Starshina. "We sell only by the day. That is to say, as much land as you can walk round in a day, that much land is yours. That is our measure, and the price is 1,000 roubles."

Pakhom was astounded.

"Why, a man might walk round a great deal in a day," he said.

The Starshina smiled again.

"Well, at all events," he said, "it will be yours. Only, there is one condition—namely, that if on that same day you do not return to the spot whence you started, your money is forfeited."

"But how do you decide upon that spot?" asked Pakhom.

"We take our stand," replied the Starshina, "upon whatsoever spot you may select. I and my people remain here, while you start off and describe a circle. Behind you will ride some of our young men, to plant stakes wherever you may desire that to be done. Thereafter a plough will be driven round those stakes. Describe what circle you wish; only, by the time of setting of the sun you must have returned to the place from which you started. As much land as you may circle, that much land will be yours"

So Pakhom accepted these terms, and it was agreed to make an early start on the morrow. Then the company talked again, drank more kumiss, and ate more mutton, passing on thence to tea, and the

ceremonies being prolonged until night-fall. At length Pakhom was led to a bed of down and the Bashkirs dispersed, after first promising to gather on the morrow beyond the river and ride out to the appointed spot before sunrise.

Pakhom lay on his bed of down, but could not get a wink of sleep for thinking of the land which as he said, "I am going to farm here".

"For I mean to mark out a very large 'Promised Land' to-morrow," he continued to himself. "I can cover at least fifty versts in the day, and fifty versts should enclose somewhere about 10,000 dessiatins. Then I shall be under nobody's thumb, and be able to afford a pair-ox plough and two labourers. I shall plough up the best land, and feed stock on the rest."

All that night Pakhom never closed his eyes, but dozed off for a short while just before dawn. The instant he did so he had a dream. He seemed to be lying in this identical wagon and listening to someboby laughing and talking outside. Wishing to see who it was laughing so much, he went outside, and saw the Starshina sitting on the ground and holding his sides as he rolled about in ecstasies of mirth. Then in his dream Pakhom walked up to him and asked him what the joke was—and immediately saw that it was not the Starshina at all, but the merchant who had so lately visited him to tell him about this land. Then again, he had scarcely so much as said to the merchant, "Did I not see you at my home a little while ago?" when the merchant suddenly changed into the peasant from

away down the Volga who had called at his farm in the old country. Finally Pakhom perceived that this peasant was not a peasant at all, but the Devil himself, with horns and hoofs, and that he was gazing fixedly at something as he sat there and laughed. Then Pakhom thought to himself: "What is he looking at, and why does he laugh so much?" And in his dream he stepped a little aside to look, and saw a man—barefooted, and clad only in a shirt and breeches—lying flat on his back, with his face as white as a sheet. And presently, looking yet more attentively at the man, Pakhom saw that the man was himself!

He gave a gasp and awoke—awoke feeling as if the dream were real. Then he looked to see if it were getting light yet, and saw that the dawn was near.

"It is time to start," he thought. "I must arouse these good people".

Pakhom arose, awakened his workman in the *tarantass*, and told him to put the horse in and go round to call the Bashkirs, since it was time to go out upon the steppe and measure off the land. So the Bashkirs arose and got themselves ready, and the Starshina also arrived. They breakfasted of kumiss and were for giving Pakhom some tea, but he could not wait. "If we are to go, let us go," he said. "It is fully time". So the Bashkirs harnessed up and set out some on horseback, and some in carts, while Pakhom drove in his *tarantass* with his workman. They came out upon the steppe just as the dawn was breaking, and proceeded towards a little knoll—

called in the Bashkir dialect a shichan. There the people in the carts alighted, and everyone collected together. The Starshina approached Pakhom and pointed all round with his hand. "Whatsoever land you see from here," he said, "is ours. Choose whichever direction you like". Pakhom's eyes glowed, for all the land was grass, level as the palm of his hand, and black beneath the turf as a poppyhead. Only where there was a ravine was there a break in the grass—grass which was everywhere breast-high. The Starshina took off his fox-skin cap, and laid it in the exact centre of the knoll. "This," he said, "will be the mark. Lay you your money in it, and your servant shall remain beside it while you are gone. From this mark you will start, and to this mark you will return. As much land as you circle, all of it will be yours."

Pakhom took out his money, and laid it in the cap. Then he divested himself of his cloak, stripped himself to his waistcoat, tightened his belt round his stomach, thrust his wallet with some bread into his bosom, tied a flask of water to his shoulder-strap, pulled up his long boots, and prepared to start. He kept debating within himself which direction it would be best to take, for the land was so good everywhere. "Oh, well, as it is all the same, I will walk towards the rising sun," he decided at length. So he turned his face that way, and kept trying his limbs while waiting for the sun to appear. "I must lose no time," he thought, "for I shall do my best walking while the air is yet cool."

Then the mounted Bashkirs also ascended the knoll, and stationed themselves behind Pakhom. No sooner had the sun shot his first rays above the horizon than Pakhom started forward and walked out into the steppe, the mounted men riding behind them.

He walked neither slowly nor hurriedly. After he had gone about a verst he stopped, and had a stake put in. Then he went on again. He was losing his first stiffness and beginning to lengthen his stride. Presently he stopped again, and had another stake put in. He looked up at the sun—which was now lighting the knoll clearly, with the people standing there—and calculated that he had gone about five versts. He was beginning to grow warm now, so he took off his waistcoat, and then fastened up his belt again. Then he went on another five versts, and stopped. It was growing really hot now. He looked at the sun again, and saw that it was breakfast time. "One stage done!" he thought. "But there are four of them in the day, and it is early yet to change my direction. Nevertheless, I must take my boots off". So he set down, took them off, and went again. Walking was easier now. "As soon as I have covered another five versts," he reflected, "I will begin to bend round to the left. That spot was exceedingly well chosen. The farther I go, the better the land is". So he kept straight on, although, when he looked round, the knoll was almost out of sight, and the people on it looked like little black ants.

"Now," he said to himself at length, "I have made the circle large enough, and must bend round.

He had sweated a good deal and was thirsty, so he raised the flask and took a drink. Then he had a stake put in at that point, and bent round sharply to the left. On he went and on, through the high grass and the burning heat. He was beginning to tire now, and, glancing at the sun, saw that it was dinner-time. "Now," he thought to himself, "I might venture to take a rest." So he stopped and ate some bread, though without sitting down, since he said to himself, "If I once sat down I should go on to lying down, and so end by going off to sleep." He waited a little, therefore, till he felt rested, and then went on again. At first he found walking easy, for the meal had revived his strength, but presently the sun seemed to grow all the hotter as it began to slant towards evening. Pakhom was nearly worn out now, yet he merely thought to himself: "An hour's pain may a century gain."

He had traversed about ten versts of this lap of the circle, and was about to bend inwards again to the left, when he caught sight of an excellent bit of land round a dry ravine. It would be pity to leave that out. "Flax would grow so splendidly there!" he thought. So he kept straight on until he had taken in the ravine, and, having had a stake planted at the spot, again wheeled inwards. Looking towards the knoll he could see that the people were almost indistinguishable. They could not be less than fifteen versts away. "Well," he thought, "I have covered the two long laps of the circuit, and must take this last one by the shortest cut possible." So

he started upon the last lap, and quickened his pace. Once again he looked at the sun, It was now drawing near to the time of the evening meal, and he had only covered two versts of the distance. The starting point was still thirteen versts away. "I must hurry straight along now," he said to himself, "however rough the country be. I must not take in a single extra piece of the way. I have enclosed sufficient as it is." And Pakhom headed straight for the knoll.

He pressed on straight in its direction, yet found walking very difficult now. His feet were aching badly, for he had chafed and bruised them and they were beginning to totter under him. He would have given anything to have rest for a while, yet knew that he must not, if he was ever to regain the knoll before sunset. The sun at least would not wait. Nay, it was like a driver ever lashing him on. From time to time he staggered. "Surely I have not miscalculated?" he thought to himself. "Surely I have not taken in too much land ever to get back, however much I hurry? There is such a long way to go yet, and I am dead beat. It cannot be that all my money and toil have gone in vain? Ah, well, I must do my best."

Pakhom pulled himself together, and broke into a run. He had torn his feet till they were bleeding, yet he still ran on, ran on, ran further and further. Waistcoat, boots, flask, cap—he flung them all away. "Ah!" was his thought, "I was too pleased with what I saw. Now everything is lost, and I shall never

reach the mark before sunset." His fears served to render him only the more breathless, but he still ran on, his shirt and breeches clinging to his limbs with sweat, and his mouth perched. In his breasts there were a pair of blacksmith's bellows working and in his heart a steam hammer, while his legs seemed to be breaking under him and to be no longer his own. He had lost all thought of the land now. All that he thought of was to avoid dying from exertion. Yet, although he was so afraid of dying, he could not stop. "To have gone so far," he thought, "and then to stop! Why they would think me a fool!" By this time he could hear the Bashkirs cheering and shouting to him, and their cries stirred his heart with fresh spirit. On, on he ran with his last remaining strength, while the sun was just touching the horizon. Ah, but he was close to the spot now! He could see the people on the knoll waving their hands to him and urging him on. He could see the foxskin cap lying on the ground, the money in it, the Starshina sitting beside it with his hands pressed to his sides. Suddenly Pakhom remembered his dream. "Yet I have much land now," he thought, "if only God should bring me safe to live upon it. But my heart misgives me that I have killed myself." Still he ran on. For the last time he looked at the sun. Large and red, it had touched the earth, and was beginning to sink below the horizon. Pakhom reached the knoll just as it set. "Ah!" he cried in his despair, for he thought that everything was lost. Suddenly, however, he remembered that he could not see from

below so well as could the people on the knoll above him, and that to them the sun would still seem not to have set. He rushed at the slope, and could see as he scrambled up it that the cap was still there. Then he stumbled and fell—yet in the very act of falling stretched out his hands towards the cap—and touched it”.

“Ah, young man,” cried the Starshina, “you have earned much land indeed !”

Pakhom’s servant ran to his master and tried to raise him, but blood was running from his mouth. Pakhom lay there dead. The servant cried out in consternation, but the Starshina remained sitting on his haunches—laughing, and holding his hands to his sides.

At length he got up, took a spade from the ground, and threw it to the servant.

“Bury him,” was all he said.

The Bashkirs arose and departed. Only the servant remained. He dug a grave of the same length as Pakhom’s form from head to heels—three Russian ells—and buried him.

Leo Tolstoy.

THE PHYSICIAN AND THE SARATOGA TRUNK

MR. Silas Q. Scuddamore was a young American of a simple and harmless disposition, which was the more to his credit as he came from New England—a quarter of the New World not precisely famous for those qualities. Although he was exceedingly rich, he kept a note of all his expenses in a little paper-book ; and he had chosen to study the attractions of Paris from the Seventh Storey of what is called a furnished hotel, in the Latin Quarter. There was a great deal of habit in his penuriousness ; and his virtue, which was very remarkable among his associates, was principally founded upon diffidence and youth.

The next room to his was inhabited by a lady very attractive in her air and very elegant in toilette, whom, on his first arrival, he had taken for a countess. In course of time he had learned that she was known by the name of Madame Zephyrine, and that whatever station she occupied in life it was not that of a person of title. Madame Zephyrine, probably in the hope of enchanting the young American, used to flaunt by him on the stairs with a civil inclination, for a word of course, and a knock-down look out of her black eyes, and disappear in a rustle of silk, and with the revelation of an admirable foot and ankle. But these advances, far from encouraging Mr. Scuddamore, plunged him into the depths of

depression and bashfulness. She had come to him several times for a light, or to apologise for the imaginary depredations of her *poodle*¹, but his mouth was closed in the presence of so superior a being, his French promptly left him and he could only stare and stammer until she was gone. The slenderness of their intercourse did not prevent him from throwing out insinuations of very glorious order when he was safely alone with a few males.

The room on the other side of the American's—for there were three rooms on a floor in the hotel—was tenanted by an old English physician of rather doubtful reputation. Dr. Noel, for that was his name, had been forced to leave London, where he enjoyed a large and increasing practice ; and it was hinted that the police had been the instigators of his change of scene. At least he, who had made something of a figure in earlier life, now dwelt in the Latin Quarter in great simplicity and solitude, and devoted much of his time to study. Mr. Scuddamore had made his acquaintance, and the pair would now and then dine together frugally in a restaurant across the street.

Silas Q. Scuddamore had many little vices of the more respectable order, and was not restrained by delicacy from indulging them in many rather doubtful ways. Chief among his foibles stood curiosity. He was a born gossip ; and life, and especially those parts of it in which he had no experience, interested him to the degree of passion. He was a pert, invincible questioner, pushing his inquiries with equal pertinacity and indiscretion ; he had been observed,

when he took a letter to the post, to weigh it in his hand, to turn it over and over, and study the address with care ; and when he found a flaw in the partition between his room and Madame Zephyrine's instead of filling it up, he enlarged and improved the opening, and made use of it as a spy-hole on his neighbour's affairs.

One day, in the end of March, his curiosity growing as it was indulged, he enlarged the hole a little further so that he might command another corner of the room. That evening, when he went as usual to inspect Madame Zephyrine's movements, he was astonished to find the aperture obscured in an odd manner on the other side, and still more abashed when the obstacle was suddenly withdrawn and a titter of laughter reached his ears. Some of the plaster had evidently betrayed the secret of his spy-hole, and his neighbour had been returning the compliment in kind. Mr. Scuddamore was moved to a very acute feeling of annoyance ; he condemned Madame Zephyrine unmercifully ; he even blamed himself ; but when he found, next day, that she had taken no means to baulk him of his favourite pastime, he continued to profit by her carelessness, and gratify his idle curiosity.

The next day Madame Zephyrine received a long visit from a tall, loosely built man of fifty or upwards, whom Silas had not hitherto seen. His tweed suit and coloured shirt, no less than his shaggy side-whiskers, identified him as a Britisher, and his dull grey eye affected Silas with a sense of cold. He kept

screwing his mouth from side to side and round and round during the whole colloquy, which was carried on in whispers. More than once it seemed to the young New Englander as if their gestures indicated his own apartment ; but the only thing definite he could gather by the most scrupulous attention was the remark made by the Englishman in a somewhat higher key, as if in answer to some reluctance or opposition :

"I have studied his taste to a nicety, and I tell you again and again you are the only woman of the sort that I can lay my hands on."

In answer to this, Madame Zephyrine sighed, and appeared by a gesture to resign herself, like one yielding to unqualified authority.

That afternoon the observatory was finally blinded, a *wardrobe*² having been drawn in front of it upon the other side, and while Silas was still lamenting over this misfortune, which he attributed to the Britisher's malign suggestion, the *concierge*³ brought him up a letter in a female handwriting. It was conceived in French of no very rigorous orthography, bore no signature, and in the most encouraging terms invited the young American to be present in a certain part of the Bullier Ball at eleven o'clock that night. Curiosity and timidity fought a long battle in his heart ; sometimes he was all virtue, sometimes all fire and daring ; and the result of it was that, long before ten, Mr. Silas Q. Scuddamore presented himself in unimpeachable attire at the door of the Bullier Ball Rooms, and paid his entry money with a

sense of reckless devilry that was not without its charm.

It was Carnival time, and the Ball was very full and noisy. The lights and the crowd at first rather abashed our young adventurer, and then, mounting to his brain with a sort of intoxication, put him in possession of more than his own share of manhood. He felt ready to face the devil, and strutted in the ball-room, with the swagger of a cavalier. While he was thus parading he became aware of Madame Zephyrine and her Britisher in conference behind a pillar. The cat-like spirit of *eavesdropping*⁴ overcame him at once. He stole nearer and nearer on the couple from behind until he was within earshot.

"That is the man," the Britisher was saying, "there—with the long blond hair—speaking to a girl in green."

Silas identified a very handsome young fellow of small stature, who was plainly the object of this designation.

"It is well," said Madame Zephyrine. "I shall do my utmost. But, remember, the best of us may fail in such a matter."

"Tut !" retured her companion ; I answer for the result. Have I not chosen you from thirty ? Go, but be wary of the Prince. I cannot think what cursed accident has brought him here to-night. As if there were not a dozen balls in Paris better worth his notice than this riot of students and counter-jumpers ! See him where he sits, more like a reign-

ing Emperor at home than a Prince upon his holidays."

Silas was again lucky. He observed a person of rather a full build, strikingly handsome, and a very stately and courteous demeanour, seated at table with another handsome young man several years his junior, who addressed him with conspicuous deference. The name of Prince struck gratefully on Silas's Republican hearing, and the aspect of the person to whom that name was applied exercised its unusual charm upon his mind. He left Madam Zephyrine and her Englishman to take care of each other, and threading his way through the Assembly, approached the table which the Prince and his confidant had honoured with their choice.

"I tell you, Geraldine," the former was saying, "the action is madness. Yourself (I am glad to remember it) chose your brother for this perilous service, and you are bound in duty to have a guard upon his conduct. He had consented to delay so many days in Paris; that was already an imprudence, considering the character of the man he had to deal with; but now, when he is within eight-and forty hours of his departure, when he is within two or three days of the decisive trial, I ask you, is this a place for him to spend his time? He should be in a gallery at practice; he should be sleeping long hours and taking moderate exercise on foot; he should be on a rigorous diet, without white wines or brandy. Does the dog imagine we are all playing comedy? The thing is deadly earnest, Geraldine."

"I know the lad too well to interfere," replied Colonel Geraldine, "and well enough not to be alarmed. He is more cautious than you fancy, and of an indomitable spirit. If it had been a woman I should not say so much, but I trust the President to him and the two valets without an instant's apprehension."

"I am gratified to hear you say so," replied the Prince, "but my mind is not at rest. These servants are well-trained spies, and already has not this miscreant succeeded three times in eluding their observation and spending several hours on end in private, and most likely dangerous, affairs? An amateur might have lost him by accident, but if Rudolph and Jerome were thrown off the scent, it must have been done on purpose, and by a man who had a cogent reason and exceptional resources."

"I believe the question is now one between my brother and myself," replied Geraldine, with a shade of deference in his tone.

"I permit it to be so, Colonel Geraldine," returned Prince Florizel. "Perhaps, for that very reason, you should be all the more ready to accept my counsels. But enough. That girl in yellow dances well."

And the talk veered into the ordinary topics of a Paris ballroom in the Carnival.

Silas remembered where he was, and that the hour was already near at hand when he ought to be upon the scene of his assignation. The more he reflected the less he liked the prospect, and as at that moment an eddy in the crowd began to draw him in the direction of the door, he suffered it to

carry him away without resistance. The eddy stranded him in a corner under the gallery, where his ear was immediately struck with the voice of Madame Zephyrine. She was speaking in French with the young man of the blond locks who had been pointed out by the strange Britisher not half an hour before.

"I have a character at stake," she said, "or I would put no other condition than my heart recommends. But you have only to say so much to the porter, and he will let you go by without a word."

"But why this talk of debt?" objected her companion.

"Heavens!" said she, "do you think I do do not understand my own hotel?"

And she went by, clinging affectionately to her companion's arm.

This put Silas in mind of his billet.

"Ten minutes hence," thought he, "and I may be walking with as beautiful a woman as that, and even better dressed—perhaps a real lady, possibly a woman of title."

And then he remembered the spelling, and was a little downcast.

"But it may have been written by her maid," he imagined.

The clock was only a few minutes from the hour and this immediate proximity set his heart beating at a curious and rather disagreeable speed. He reflected with relief that he was in no way bound to put in an appearance. Virtue and cowardice were

together, and he made once more for the door, but this time of his own accord, and battling against the stream of people which was now moving in a contrary direction. Perhaps this prolonged resistance wearied him, or perhaps he was in that frame of mind when merely to continue in the same determination for a certain number of minutes produces a reaction and different purpose. Certainly, at least, he wheeled about for a third time, and did not stop until he had found a place of concealment within a few yards of the appointed place.

Here he went through an agony of spirit, in which he several times prayed to God for help, for Silas had been devoutly educated. He had now not the least inclination for the meeting; nothing kept him from flight but a silly fear lest he should be thought unmannerly; but this was so powerful that it kept head against all other motives; and although it could not decide him to advance, prevented him from definitely running away. At last the clock indicated ten minutes past the hour. Young Scuddamore's spirit began to rise; he peered round the corner and saw no one at the place of meeting; doubtless his unknown correspondent had wearied and gone away. He became as bold as he had been formerly timid. It seemed to him that if he came at all to the appointment, however late, he was clear from the charge of cowardice. Nay, now he began to suspect a hoax, and actually complimented himself on his shrewdness in having suspected and out-

manoeuvred his mystifiers. So very idle a thing is a boy's mind !

Armed with these reflections, he advanced boldly from his corner ; but he had not taken above a couple of steps before a hand was laid upon his arm. He turned and beheld a lady cast in a very large mould and with somewhat stately features, but bearing no mark of severity in her looks.

"I see that you are a very self-confident lady killer" said she, "for you make yourself expected. But I was determined to meet you. When a woman has once so far forgotten herself as to make the first advance she has long ago left behind her all considerations of petty pride."

Silas was overwhelmed by the size and attractions of his correspondent and the suddenness with which, she had fallen upon him. But she soon set him at his ease. She was very towardly and lenient in her behaviour ; she led him on to make pleasantries, and then applauded him to the echo ; and in a very short time, between blandishments and liberal exhibition of warm brandy, she had not only induced him to fancy himself in love, but to declare his passion with the greatest vehemence.

"Alas !" she said, "I do not know whether I ought not to deplore this moment, great as is the pleasure you give me by your words. Hitherto I was alone to suffer ; now, poor boy, there will be two. I am not my own mistress. I dare not ask you to visit me at my own house, for I am watched by jealous eyes." "Let me see," she added, "I am

older than you, although so much weaker ; and while I trust in your courage and determination, I must employ my own knowledge of the world for our mutual benefit. Where do you live ?”

He told her that he lodged in a furnished hotel, and named the street and number.

She seemed to reflect for some minutes, with an effort of mind.

“I see,” she said at last, “You will be faithful and obedient, will you not ?”

Silas assured her eagerly of his fidelity.

“To-morrow night, then,” she continued, with an encouraging smile, “You must remain at home all the evening ; and if any friends should visit you, dismiss them at once on any pretext that most readily presents itself. Your door is probably shut by ten ?” she asked.

“By eleven,” answered Silas.

“At a quarter-past eleven,” pursued the lady “leave the house. Merely cry for the door to be opened and be sure you fall into no talk with the porter, as that might ruin everything. Go straight to the corner where the Luxembourg Gardens join the Boulevard ; there you will find me awaiting you. I trust you to follow my advice from point to point ; and remember, if you fail me in only one particular, you will bring the sharpest trouble on a woman whose only fault is to have seen and loved you.”

“I cannot see the use of all these instructions,” said Silas.

"I believe you are already beginning to treat me as a master," she cried, tapping him with her fan upon the arm. "Patience, patience! that should come in time. A woman loves to be obeyed at first, although afterwards she finds her pleasure in obeying. Do as I ask you, for heaven's sake, or I will answer for nothing. Indeed, now I think of it," she added, with the manner of one who has just seen further into a difficulty. "I find a better plan of keeping importunate visitors away. Tell the porter to admit no one for you, except a person who may come that night to claim a debt; and speak with some feeling, as though you feared the interview, so that he may take your words in earnest."

"I think you may trust me to protect myself against intruders," he said, not without a little pique.

"That is how I should prefer the thing arranged," she answered coldly. "I know you men; you think nothing of a woman's reputation."

Silas blushed and somewhat hung his head; for the scheme he had in view had involved a little vain—glorying before his acquaintance.

"Above all," she added, "do not speak to the porter as you come out."

"And why?" said he. "Of all your instructions that seems to me the least important."

"You at first doubted the wisdom of some of the others, which you now see to be very necessary," she replied. "Believe me, this also has its uses; in time you will see them; and what am I to think of your affection, if you refuse me such trifles at our first interview?"

Silas confounded himself in explanations and apologies ; in the middle of these she looked up at the clock and clapped her hands together with a suppressed scream.

"Heavens !" she cried, "Is it so late ? I have not an instant to lose. Alas, we poor women, what slaves we are ! What have I not risked for you already ?"

And after repeating her directions, which she artfully combined with caresses and the most abandoned looks, she bade him farewell and disappeared among the crowd.

The whole of the next day Silas was filled with a sense of great importance ; he was now sure she was a countess ; and when evening came he minutely obeyed her orders and was at the corner of the Luxembourg Gardens by the hour appointed. No one was there. He waited nearly half an hour, looking in the face of every one who passed or loitered near the spot ; he even visited the neighbouring corners of the Boulevard and made a complete circuit of the garden railings ; but there was no beautiful countess to throw herself into his arms. At last, and most reluctantly, he began to retrace his steps towards his hotel. On the way he remembered the words he had heard pass between Madame Zephyrine and the blond young man, and they gave him an indefinite uneasiness.

"It appears," he reflected, "that every one has to tell lies to our porter."

He rang the bell, the door opened before him, and the porter in his bed-clothes came to offer him a light.

"Has he gone?" inquired the porter.

"He? Whom do you mean?" asked Silas, somewhat sharply, for he was irritated by his disappointment.

"I did not notice him to go out," continued the porter, "but I trust you paid him. We do not care, in this house, to have lodgers who cannot meet their liabilities."

"What the devil do you mean?" demanded Silas rudely. "I cannot understand a word of this *farrago*⁵."

"The short, blond young man who came for his debt," returned the other. "Him it is I mean. Who else should it be, when I heard your orders to admit no one else?"

"Why, good God, of course, he never came," retorted Silas.

"I believe what I believe," returned the porter, putting his tongue into his cheek with a most roguish air.

"You are an insolent scoundrel," cried Silas, and, feeling that he had made a ridiculous exhibition of asperity, and at the same time bewildered by a dozen alarms, he turned and began to run upstairs.

"Do you not want a light then?" cried the porter.

But Silas only hurried the faster, and did not pause until he had reached the seventh landing and stood in front of his own door. There he waited a moment to recover his breath, assailed by the worst forebodings and almost dreading to enter the room.

When at last he did so he was relieved to find it dark and, to all appearance, untenanted. He drew a long breath. Here he was, home again in safety, and this should be his last folly as certainly as it had been his first. The matches stood on a little table by the bed, and he began to grope his way in that direction. As he moved, his apprehensions grew upon him once more and he was pleased, when his foot encountered an obstacle, to find it nothing more alarming than a chair. At last he touched curtains. From the position of the window, which was faintly visible, he knew he must be at the foot of the bed, and had only to feel his way along it in order to reach the table in question.

He lowered his hand, but what it touched was not simply a counterpane—it was a counterpane with something underneath it like the outline of a human leg. Silas withdrew his arm and stood a moment petrified.

“What, what,” he thought, “can this be token?”

He listened intently, but there was no sound of breathing. Once more, with a great effort, he reached out the end of his finger to the spot he had already touched; but this time he leaped back half a yard and stood shivering and fixed with terror. There was something in his bed. What it was he knew not but there was something there.

It was some seconds before he could move. Then, guided by an instinct, he fell straight upon the matches, and keeping his back towards the bed lighted a candle. As soon as the flame had kindled,

he turned slowly round and looked for what he feared to see. Sure enough there was the worst of his imaginations realised. The coverlid was drawn carefully up over the pillow, but it moulded the outline of a human body lying motionless ; and when he dashed forward and flung aside the sheets, he beheld the blond young man whom he had seen in the Bullier Ball the night before, his eyes open and without speculation, his face swollen and blackened and a thin stream of blood trickling from his nostrils.

Silas uttered a long, tremulous wail, dropped the candle, and fell on his knees beside the bed.

Silas was awakened from the stupor into which his terrible discovery had plunged him by a prolonged but discreet tapping at the door. It took him some seconds to remember his position ; and when he hastened to prevent any one from entering it was already too late. Dr. Noel, in a tall nightcap, carrying a lamp which lighted up his long white countenance, sidling in his gait and peering and cocking his head like some sort of bird pushed the door slowly open, and advanced into the middle of the room.

"I thought I heard a cry," began the Doctor, "and fearing you might be unwell I did not hesitate to offer this intrusion."

Silas, with a flushed face and a fearful beating heart, kept between the Doctor and the bed : but he found no voice to answer.

"You are in the dark," pursued the Doctor ; "and yet you have not even begun to prepare for rest."

You will not easily persuade me against my own eyesight ; and your face declares most eloquently that you require either a friend or a physician—which is it to be ? Let me feel your pulse, for that is often a just reporter of the heart."

He advanced to Silas, who still retreated before him backwards, and sought to take him by the wrist ; but the strain on the young American's nerves had become too great for endurance. He avoided the Doctor with a febrile movement, and, throwing himself upon the floor, burst into a flood of weeping.

As soon as Dr. Noel perceived the dead man in the bed his face darkened ; and hurrying back to the door, which he had left ajar, he hastily closed and double-locked it.

"Up !" he cried, addressing Silas in strident tones ; "this is no time for weeping. What have you done ? How came this body in your room ? Speak freely to one who may be helpful. Do you imagine I would ruin you ? Do you think this piece of dead flesh on your pillow can alter in any degree the sympathy with which you have inspired me ?" Credulous youth, the horror with which blind and unjust law regards an action never attaches to the doer in the eyes of those who love him ; and if I saw the friend of my heart return to me out of seas of blood he would be in no way changed in my affection."

"Raise yourself," he said ; "good and ill are a chimera ; there is naught in life except destiny, and however you may be circumstanced there is one at your side who will help you to the last."

Thus encouraged, Silas gathered himself together, and in a broken voice, and helped out by the Doctor's interrogations, contrived at last to put him in possession of the facts. But the conversation between the Prince and Geraldine he altogether omitted, as he had understood little of its purport, and had no idea that it was in any way related to his own misadventure.

"Alas !" cried Dr. Noel, "I am much abused, or you have fallen innocently into the most dangerous hands in Europe. Poor boy, what a pit has been dug for your simplicity ! into what a deadly peril have your unwary feet been conducted ! This man," he said "this Englishman, whom you twice saw and whom I suspect to be the soul of the contrivance, can you describe him ? Was he young or old ? tall or short ?"

But Silas, who, for all his curiosity, had no seeing eye in his head, was able to supply nothing but meagre generalities, which it was impossible to recognise.

"I would have it a piece of education in all schools !" cried the Doctor angrily. "Where is the use of eyesight and articulate speech if a man cannot observe and recollect the features of his enemy ? I, who know all the gangs of Europe, might have identified him, and gained new weapons for your defence. Cultivate this art in future, my poor boy ; you may find it of momentous service."

"The future !" repeated Silas. "What future is there left for me except the gallows ?"

"Youth is but a cowardly season," returned the Doctor ; "and a man's own troubles look blacker than they are. I am old, and yet I never despair."

"Can I tell such a story to the police ?" demanded Silas.

"Assuredly not," replied the Doctor. "From what I see already of the machination in which you have been involved, your case is desperate upon that side ; and for the narrow eye of the authorities you are infallibly the guilty person. And remember that we only know a portion of the plot ; and the same infamous contrivers have doubtless arranged many other circumstances which would be elicited by a police inquiry, and help to fix the guilt more certainly upon your innocence."

"I am then lost, indeed !" cried Silas.

"I have not said so," answered Dr. Noel, "for I am a cautious man."

"But look at this !" objected Silas, pointing to the body.

"Here is this object in my bed ; not to be explained, not to be disposed of, not to be regarded without horror."

"Horror !" replied the Doctor. "No. When this sort of clock has run down, it is no more to me than an ingenious piece of mechanism, to be investigated with the bistoury. When blood is once cold and stagnant, it is no longer human blood ; when flesh is once dead, it is no longer that flesh which we desire in our lovers and respect in our friends. The grace, the attraction, the terror, have all gone from it with

the animating spirit. Accustom yourself to look upon it with composure ; for if my scheme is practicable you will have to live some days in constant proximity to that which now so greatly horrifies you."

"Your scheme ?" cried Silas. "What is that ? Tell me speedily, Doctor ; for I have scarcely courage enough to continue to exist."

Without replying, Dr. Noel turned towards the bed, and proceeded to examine the corpse.

"Quite dead," he murmured. "Yes, as I had supposed, the pockets empty. Yes, and the name cut off the shirt. Their work has been done thoroughly and well. Fortunately, he is of small stature."

Silas followed these words with an extreme anxiety. At last the Doctor, his autopsy completed took a chair and addressed the young American with a smile.

"Since I came into your room," said he, "although my ears and my tongue have been so busy, I have not suffered my eyes to remain idle. I noted a little while ago that you have there, in the corner, one of those monstrous constructions which your fellow-countrymen carry with them into all quarters of the globe...in a word, a Saratoga trunk. Until this moment I have never been able to conceive the utility of these erections ; but then I began to have a glimmer. Whether it was for convenience in the slave trade, or to obviate the result of too ready an employment of the bowie-knife, I cannot bring myself to decide. But one thing I see plainly—the object of such a box is to contain a human body."

"Surely," cried Silas, "surely this is not a time for jesting."

"Although I may express myself with some degree of pleasantry," replied the Doctor, "the purport of my words is entirely serious. And the first thing we have to do, my young friend, is to empty your coffer of all that it contains."

Silas, obeying the authority of Dr. Noel, put himself at his disposition. The Saratoga trunk was soon gutted of its contents, which made a considerable litter on the floor; and then—Silas taking the heels and the Doctor supporting the shoulders—the body of the murdered man was carried from the bed, and after some difficulty, doubled up and inserted whole into the empty box. With an effort on the part of both, the lid was forced down upon this unusual baggage, and the trunk was locked and corded by the Doctor's own hand, while Silas disposed of what had been taken out between the closet and a chest of drawers.

"Now," said the Doctor, "the first step has been taken on the way to your deliverance. To-morrow, or, rather to-day, it must be your task to allay the suspicions of your porter, paying him all that you owe; while you may trust me to make the arrangements necessary to a safe conclusion. Meantime, follow me to my room, where I shall give you a safe and powerful opiate; for, whatever you do, you must have rest."

The next day was the longest in Silas's memory; it seemed as if it would never be done. He denied

himself to his friends, and sat in a corner with his eyes fixed upon the Saratoga trunk in dismal contemplation. His own former indiscretions were now returned upon him in kind; for the observatory had been once more opened, and he was conscious of an almost continual study from Madame Zephyrine's apartment. So distressing did this become that he was at last obliged to block up the spy-hole from his own side; and when he was thus secured from observation he spent a considerable portion of his time in contrite tears and prayer.

Late in the evening, Dr. Noel entered the room carrying in his hand a pair of sealed envelopes without address, one somewhat bulky, and the other so slim as to seem without enclosure.

"Silas," he said, seating himself at the table, "the time has now come for me to explain my plan for your salvation. To-morrow morning, at an early hour, Prince Florizel of Bohemia returns to London, after having diverted himself for a few days with the Parisian Carnival. It was my fortune, a good while ago, to do Colonel Geraldine, his Master of the Horse, one of those services, so common in my profession, which are never forgotten upon either side. I have no need to explain to you the nature of the obligation under which he was laid; suffice it to say that I knew him ready to serve me in any practicable manner. Now, it was necessary for you to gain London with your trunk unopened. To this the Custom House seemed to oppose a fatal difficulty; but it bethought me that the baggage of so considerable a person as the Prince, is, as a matter of

courtesy, passed without examination by the officers of Custom. I applied to Colonel Geraldine, and succeeded in obtaining a favourable answer. To-morrow, if you go before six to the hotel where the Prince lodges, your baggage will be passed over as a part of his and you yourself will make the journey as a member of his suite."

"It seems to me, as you speak, that I have already seen both the Prince and Colonel Geraldine; I even over-heard some of their conversation the other evening at the Bullier Ball."

"It is probable enough; for the prince loves to mix with all societies," replied the Doctor. "Once arrived in London," he pursued, "your task is nearly ended. In this more bulky envelope I have given you a letter which I dare not address; but in the other you will find the designation of the house to which you must carry it along with your box, which will there be taken from you and not trouble you any more."

"Alas!" said Silas, "I have every wish to believe you but how is it possible? You open up to me a bright prospect, but I ask you, is my mind capable of receiving so unlikely a solution? Be more generous and let me further understand your meaning."

The Doctor seemed painfully impressed.

"Boy," he answered, "you do not know how hard a thing you ask of me. But be it so. I am now inured to humiliation; and it would be strange if I refused you this, after having granted you so much. Know then, that although I now make so quiet an

appearance—frugal, solitary, addicted to study—when I was younger my name was once a rallying-cry among the most astute and dangerous spirits of London; and while I was outwardly an object for respect and consideration, my true power resided in the most secret, terrible, and criminal relations. It is to one of the persons who then obeyed me that I now address myself to deliver you from your burden. They were men of many different nations and dexterities, all bound together by a formidable oath, and working to the same purpose; the trade of association was in murder and I who speak to you, innocent as I appear, was the chieftain of this redoubtable crew.”

“What?” cried Silas. “A murderer? And one with whom murder was a trade? Can I take your hand? Ought I so much as to accept your service? Dark and criminal old man, would you make an accomplice of my youth and my distress?”

The Doctor bitterly laughed.

“You are difficult to please, Mr. Scuddamore,” said he; “but I now offer you your choice of company between the murdered man and murderer. If your conscience is too nice to accept my aid, say so, and I will immediately leave you. Thenceforward you can deal with your trunk and its belongings as best suits your upright conscience.”

“I own myself wrong,” replied Silas. “I should have remembered how generously you offered to shield me, even before I had convinced you of my innocence, and I continue to listen to your counsels with gratitude.”

"That is well," returned the Doctor; "and I perceive you are beginning to learn some of the lessons of experience."

"At the same time," resumed the New Englander, "as you confess yourself accustomed to this tragical business, and the people to whom you recommended me are your own former associates and friends, could you not yourself undertake the transport of the box, and rid me at once of its detested presence?"

"Upon my word," replied the Doctor, "I admire you cordially. If you do not think I have already meddled sufficiently in your concerns, believe me, from my heart I think the contrary. Take or leave my services as I offer them; and trouble me with no more words of gratitude, for I value your consideration even more lightly than I do your intellect. A time will come, if you should be spared to see a number of years in health of mind, when you will think differently all this, and blush for your to-night's behaviour."

So saying, the Doctor arose from his chair, repeated his directions briefly and clearly, and departed from the room without permitting Silas any time to answer.

The next morning Silas presented himself at the hotel, where he was politely received by Colonel Geraldine, and relieved, from that moment, of all immediate alarm about his trunk and its grisly contents. The journey passed over without much incident, although the young man was horrified to overhear the sailors and railway porters complaining

among themselves about the unusual weight of the Prince's baggage. Silas travelled in a carriage with his valets, for Prince Florizel chose to be alone with his Master of the Horse. On board the steamer, however, Silas attracted His Highness's attention by the melancholy of his air and attitude as he stood gazing at the pile of baggage ; for he was still full of disquietude about the future.

"There is a young man," observed the Prince, "who must have some cause for sorrow."

"That," replied Geraldine, "is the American for whom I obtained permission to travel with your suite."

"You remind me that I have been remiss in courtesy," said Prince Florizel, and advancing to Silas, he addressed him with the most exquisite condescension in these words :

"I was charmed, young sir, to be able to gratify the desire you made known to me through Colonel Geraldine. Remember, if you please, that I shall be glad at any future time to lay you under a more serious obligation."

And he then put some questions as to the political condition of America, which Silas answered with sense and propriety.

"You are still a young man," said the Prince ; "but I observed you to be very serious for your years. Perhaps you allow your attention to be too much occupied with grave studies. But perhaps on the other hand, I am myself indiscreet and touch upon a painful subject."

"I have certainly cause to be the most miserable of men," said Silas ; "never has a more innocent person been more dismally abused."

"I will not ask you for your confidence," returned Prince Florizel. "But do not forget that Colonel Geraldine's recommendation is an unfailing passport ; and that I am not only willing, but possibly more able than many others to do you a service."

Silas was delighted with the amiability of this great personage ; but his mind soon returned upon its gloomy preoccupations ; for not even the favour of a Prince to a Republican can discharge a brooding spirit of its cares.

The train arrived at Charing Cross, where the officers of the Revenue respected the baggage of Prince Florizel in the usual manner. The most elegant equipages were in waiting ; and Silas was driven, along with the rest, to the Prince's residence. There Colonel Geraldine sought him out, and expressed himself pleased to have been of any service to a friend of the physician's, for whom he professed a great consideration.

"I hope," he added, "that you will find none of your porcelain injured. Special orders were given along the line to deal tenderly with the Prince's effects."

And then, directing the servants to place one of the carriages at the young gentleman's disposal, and at once to charge the Saratoga trunk upon dickey, the Colonel shook hands and excused himself on account of his occupations in the princely household.

Silas now broke the seal of the envelope containing the address, and directed the stately footman to drive him to Box Court, opening off the Strand. It seemed as if the place were not at all unknown to the man, for he looked startled and begged a repetition of the order. It was with a heart full of alarms, that Silas mounted into the luxurious vehicle, and was driven to his destination. The entrance to Box Court was too narrow for the passage of a coach; it was a mere footway between railings, with a post at either end. On one of these posts was seated a man, who at once jumped down and exchanged a friendly sign with the driver, while the footman opened the door and inquired of Silas whether he should take down the Saratoga Trunk, so! and to what number it should be carried.

"If you please," said Silas, "To number three."

The footman and the man who had been sitting on the post, even with the aid of Silas himself had hard work to carry in the trunk; and before it was deposited at the door of the house in question, the young American was horrified to find a score of loiterers looking on. But he knocked with as good a countenance as he could muster up, and presented the other envelope to him who opened.

"He is not at home," said he, "but if you will leave your letter and return to-morrow early, I shall be able to inform you whether and when he can receive your visit. Would you like to leave your box?" he added.

"Dearly," cried Silas ; and the next moment he repented his precipitation, and declared, with equal emphasis, that he would rather carry the box along with him to the hotel.

The crowd jeered at his indecision and followed him to the carriage with insulting remarks ; and Silas covered with shame and terror, implored the servants to conduct him to some quiet and comfortable house of entertainment in the immediate neighbourhood.

The Prince's equipage deposited Silas at the Craven Hotel in Craven Street and immediately drove away, leaving him alone with the servants of the inn. The only vacant room, it appeared, was a little den up four pairs of stairs, and looking towards the back. To this hermitage, with infinite trouble and complaint, a pair of stout porters carried the Saratoga trunk. It is needless to mention that Silas kept closely at their heels throughout the ascent and had his heart in his mouth at every corner. A single false step, he reflected and the box might go over the banisters and land its fatal contents, plainly discovered, on the pavement of the hall.

Arrived in the room, he sat down on the edge of his bed to recover from the agony that he had just endured ; but he had hardly taken his position when he was recalled to a sense of his peril by the action of the boots, who had knelt beside the trunk, and was proceeding officiously to undo its elaborate fastenings.

"Let it be !" cried Silas, "I shall want nothing from it while I stay here."

"You might have let it lie in the hall, then," growled the man; "a thing as big and heavy as a church. What you have inside I cannot fancy. If it is all money, you are a richer man than me."

"Money?" repeated Silas, in a sudden perturbation. "What do you mean by money? I have no money and you are speaking like a fool."

"All right, captain," retorted the boots with a wink. "There's nobody will touch your lordship's money. I'm as safe as the bank of," he added; but as the box is heavy, I shouldn't mind drinking something to your lordship's health."

Silas pressed two Napoleons upon his acceptance, apologizing, at the same time, for being obliged to trouble him with foreign money, and pleading his recent arrival for excuse. And the man, grumbling with even greater fervour and looking contemptuously from the money in his hand to the Saratoga trunk and back again from the one to the other, at last consented to withdraw.

For nearly two days the dead body had been packed into Silas's box: and as soon as he was alone the unfortunate New Englander nosed all the cracks and openings with the most passionate attention. But the weather was cool, and the trunk still managed to contain his shocking secret.

He took a chair beside it, and buried his face in his hands, and his mind in the most profound reflection. If he were not speedily relieved, no question but he must be speedily discovered. Alone in a strange city, without friends or accomplices, if the

Doctor's introduction failed him, he was indubitably a lost New Englander. He reflected pathetically over his ambitious designs for the future ; he should not now become the hero and spokesman of his native place of Bangor, Mine ; he should not, as he had fondly anticipated move on from office to office, from honour to honour ; he might as well divest himself at once of all hope of being acclaimed President of the United States, and leaving behind him a statue, in the worst possible style of art, to adorn the Capitol at Washington. Here he was, chained to a dead Englishman doubled up inside a Saratoga trunk ; whom he must get rid of, or perish from the rolls of national glory !

I should be afraid to chronicle the language employed by this young man to the Doctor, to the murdered man, to Madame Zephyrine, to the boots of the hotel, to the Prince's servants, and, in a word, to all who had been ever so remotely connected with his horrible misfortune.

He slunk down to dinner about seven at night ; but the yellow coffee-room appalled him, the eyes of the other diners seemed to rest on his with suspicion, and his mind remained upstairs with the Saratoga trunk. When the waiter came to offer him cheese, his nerves were already so much on edge that he leaped half way out of his chair and upset the remainder of a pint of ale upon the table-cloth.

The fellow offered to show him to the smoking-room when he had done, and although he would have much preferred to return at once to his perilous

treasure, he had not the courage to refuse and was shown downstairs to the black gas-lit celler, which formed, and possibly still forms, the divan of the Craven Hotel.

Two very sad betting men were playing billiards, attended by a moist, consumptive marker; and for the moment Silas imagined that these were the only occupants of the apartment. But at the next glance his eye fell upon a person smoking in the farthest corner, with lowered eyes and a most respectable and modest aspect. He knew at once that he had seen the face before; and, in spite of the entire change of clothes, recognised the man whom he had found seated on a post at the entrance to Box Court, and who had helped him to carry the trunk to and from the carriage. The New Englander simply turned and ran, nor did he pause until he had locked and bolted himself into his bedroom.

There, all night long, a prey to the most terrible imaginations, he watched beside the fatal box full of dead flesh. The suggestion of the boots that his trunk was full of gold inspired him with all manners of new terrors, if he so much as dared to close an eye; and the presence in the smoking-room, and under an obvious disguise, of the loiterer from Box Court convinced him that he was once more the centre of obscure machinations.

Midnight had sounded some time, when, impelled by uneasy suspicions, Silas opened his bedroom door and peered into the passage. It was dimly illuminated by a single jet of gas; and some distance off he

perceived a man sleeping on the floor in the costume of an hotel under-servant. Silas drew near the man on tip-toe. He lay partly on his back, partly on his side, and his right forearm concealed his face from recognition. Suddenly, while the American was still bending over him, the sleeper removed his arm and opened his eyes, and Silas found himself once more face to face with the loiterer of Box Court.

"Good night, sir," said the man pleasantly. But Silas was too profoundly moved to find answer, and regained his room in silence.

Towards morning, worn out by apprehension, he fell asleep on his chair, with his head forward on the trunk. In spite of so constrained an attitude and such a grisly pillow, his slumber was sound and prolonged, and he was only awakened at a late hour by a sharp tapping at the door.

He hurried to open, and found the boots without.

"You are the gentleman who called yesterday at Box Court?" he asked.

Silas, with a quiver, admitted that he had done so.

"Then this note is for you," added the servant, proffering a sealed envelope.

Silas tore it open, and found inside the words "Twelve o'clock".

He was punctual to the hour: the trunk was carried before him by several stout servants; and he was himself ushered into a room, where a man sat warming himself before the fire with his back towards the door. The sound of so many persons entering and leaving and the scraping of the trunk as

it was deposited upon the bare boards, were alike unable to attract the notice of the occupant ; and Silas stood waiting, in an agony of fear, until he should deign to recognise his presence.

Perhaps five minutes had elapsed before the man turned leisurely about, and disclosed the features of Prince Florizel of Bohemia.

"So, sir," he said with great severity, "this is the manner in which you abuse my politeness. You join yourself to persons of condition, I perceive, for no other purpose than to escape the consequences of your crimes ; and I can readily understand your embarrassment when I addressed myself to you yesterday."

"Indeed," cried Silas, "I am innocent of everything except misfortune."

And in a hurried voice, and with the greatest ingenuousness, he recounted to the Prince the whole history of his calamity.

"I see I have been mistaken," said His Highness when he had heard him to an end. "You are no other than a victim, and since I am not to punish you, you may be sure I shall do my utmost to help. And now," he continued, "to business. Open your box at once, and let me see what it contains."

Silas changed colour.

"I almost fear to look upon it," he exclaimed.

"Nay," replied the Prince, "have you looked at it already ? This is a form of sentimentality to be resisted. The sight of a sick man, whom we can still help, should appeal more directly to the feelings than

that of a dead man who is equally beyond help or harm, love or hatred. Nerve yourself, Mr. Scuddamore," and then, seeing that Silas still hesitated, "I do not desire to give another name to my request," he added.

The young American awoke as if out of a dream, and with shiver of repugnance addressed himself to loose the straps and open the lock of the Saratoga trunk. The Prince stood by, watching with a composed countenance and his hands behind his back. The body was quite stiff, and it cost Silas a great effort, both moral and physical, to dislodge it from its position, and discover the face.

Prince Florizel started back with an exclamation of painful surprise.

"Alas," he cried, "you little know, Mr. Scuddamore, what a cruel gift you have brought me. This is a young man of my own *suite*⁶ the brother of my trusted friend; and it was upon matter of my own service that he has thus perished at the hands of violent and treacherous men. Poor Geraldine," he went on, as if to himself, "in what words am I to tell you of your brother's fate? How can I excuse myself in your eyes, or in the eyes of God, for the presumptuous schemes that led him to this bloody and unnatural death? Ah, Florizel! Florizel! when will you learn the discretion that suits mortal life, and be no longer dazzled with the image of power at your disposal? Power!" he cried; "who is more powerless? I look upon this young man whom I have sacrificed, Mr. Scuddamore, and feel how small a thing it is to be a Prince."

Silas was moved at the sight of his emotion. He tried to murmur some consolatory words, and burst into tears. The Prince, touched by his obvious intention, came up to him and took him by the hand.

"Command yourself," said he, "We have both much to learn, and we shall both be better men for to-day's meeting."

Silas thanked him in silence with an affectionate look.

"Write me the address of Dr. Noel on this piece of paper," continued the Prince, leading him towards the table "and let me recommend you, when you are again in Paris, to avoid the society of that dangerous man. He has acted in this matter on a generous inspiration—that I must believe ; had he been privy to young Geraldine's death he would never have dispatched the body to the care of the actual criminal."

"The actual criminal !" repeated Silas in astonishment.

"Even so," returned the Prince. "This letter, which the disposition of Almighty Providence has so strangely delivered into my hands, was addressed to no less a person than the criminal himself, the infamous President of the Suicide Club. Seek to pry no further in these perilous affairs, but content yourself with your own miraculous escape, and leave this house at once. I have pressing affairs, and must arrange at once about this poor clay, which was so lately a gallant and handsome youth."

Silas took a grateful and submissive leave of Prince Florizel, but he lingered in Box Court until he saw him depart in a splendid carriage on a visit to Colonel Henderson of the police. Republican as he was, the young American took off his hat with almost a sentiment of devotion to the retreating carriage. And the same night he started by rail on his return to Paris.

Robert Louis Stevenson.

ROADS OF DESTINY

THE song was over. The words were David's ; the air, one of the countryside. The company about the inn table applauded heartily, for the young poet had paid for the wine.

David went out into the village street, where the night air drove the wine vapour from his head. Then he remembered that he had resolved to leave his home that night to seek fame and honour in the great world outside.

"When my poems are on every man's tongue," he told himself, in a fine exhilaration, "I will return, but not before."

Except the roysterers in the tavern, the village folk were abed. David crept softly into his room in the shed of his father's cottage and made a bundle of his small store of clothing. With this upon a staff he set his face outward upon the road that ran from Vernoy.

He passed his father's herd of sheep huddled in their nightly pen—the sheep he herded daily, leaving them to scatter while he wrote verses on scraps of paper. He hesitated—but no, his decision was made. Vernoy was no place for him. Not one soul there could share his thoughts. Out along that road lay his fate and his future.

Three leagues across the dim, moonlit country ran the road, straight as a ploughman's furrow. It

was believed in the village that the road ran to Paris, at least ; and this name the poet whispered often to himself as he walked. Never so far from Vernoy had David travelled before.

Three leagues, then, the road ran, and then joined with another and a larger road at right angles. David stood, uncertain, for a while and then took the road to the left.

Upon this more important highway were, imprinted in the dust, wheel tracks left by the recent passage of some vehicle.

Some half an hour later these traces were verified by the sight of a ponderous carriage mired in a little brook at the bottom of a steep hill. The driver and *postillions*¹ were shouting and tugging at the horses' bridles. On the road at one side stood a huge black-clothed man and a slender lady wrapped in a long, light cloak.

David saw the lack of skill in the efforts of the servants. He quietly assumed control of the work. He directed the outriders to cease their clamour at the horses and to exercise their strength upon the wheels. The driver alone urged the animals with his familiar voice ; David himself heaved a powerful shoulder at the rear of the carriage, and with one harmonious tug the great vehicle rolled up on solid ground. The outriders climbed to their places.

David stood for a moment upon one foot. The huge gentleman waved a hand. "You will enter the carriage," he said, in a voice large, like himself, but smoothed by art and habit. Obedience belonged in.

the path of such a voice. Brief as was the young poet's hesitation, it was cut shorter still by a renewal of the command. David's foot went to the step. In the darkness he perceived dimly the form of the lady upon the rear seat. He was about to seat himself opposite, when the voice again swayed him to its will, "You will sit at the lady's side."

The gentleman swung his great weight to the forward seat. The carriage proceeded up the hill. The lady was shrunk, silent into her corner. David could not estimate whether she was old or young, but a delicate mild perfume from her clothes stirred his poet's fancy to the belief that there was loveliness beneath the mystery. Here was an adventure such as he had often imagined. But as yet he held no key to it, for no word was spoken while he sat with his impenetrable companions.

In an hour's time David perceived through the window that the vehicle traversed the street of some town. Then it stopped in front of a closed and darkened house, and a postillion¹ alighted to hammer impatiently upon the door. A latticed window above flew wide and a night-capped head popped out.

"Who are ye that disturb honest folk at this time of night? My house is closed. 'Tis too late for profitable travellers to be abroad. Cease knocking at my door, and be off."

"Open," spluttered the postillion, loudly; "open for *monseigneur*² the Marquis de Beaupertuys."

"Ah!" cried the voice above. "Ten thousand pardons, my lord! I did not know—the hour is so

late—at once shall the door be opened, and the house placed at my lord's disposal."

Inside was heard the clink of chain and bar, and the door was flung open. Shivering with chill and apprehension the landlord of the *Silver³ Flagon* stood half-clad, candle in hand, upon the threshold.

David followed the Marquis out of the carriage. "As it's the lady, you must conduct her" he was ordered. The poet obeyed. He felt her small hand tremble as he guided her descent. "Into the house," was the next command.

The room was the long dining-hall of the tavern. A great oak table ran down its length. The huge gentleman seated himself in a chair at the nearer end. The lady sank into another against the wall, with an air of great weariness. David stood, considering how best he might now take his leave and continue upon his way.

"My lord," said the landlord, bowing to the floor, "h—had I ex-expected this honour, entertainment would have been ready. T—t—there is wine and cold fowl and m-m-may be—

"Candles," said the marquis, spreading the fingers of one plump white hand in a gesture he had. "Y-yes, my lord." He fetched half a dozen candles, lighted them, and set them upon the table. "If my lord would, perhaps, deign to taste a certain Burgundy—there is a cask—." "Candles," said the marquis, spreading his fingers.

"Assuredly—quickly—I fly, my lord."

A dozen more lighted candles shone in the hall. The great bulk of the marquis overflowed his chair. He was dressed in fine black from head to foot save for the snowy ruffles at his wrists and throat. Even the hilt and scabbard of his sword were black. His expression was one of sneering pride. The ends of an upturned moustache reached nearly to his mocking eyes.

The lady sat motionless, and now David perceived that she was young and possessed of pathetic and appealing beauty. He was startled from the contemplation of her forlorn loveliness by the booming voice of the marquis.

"What is your name and pursuit?"

"David Mignot. I am a poet."

The moustache of the Marquis curled nearer to his eye.

"How do you live?"

"I am also a shepherd. I guarded my father's flock," David answered, with his head high, but a flush upon his cheek.

"Then listen, master shepherd and poet, to the fortune you have blundered upon to-night. This lady is my niece, *Mademoiselle*⁴ Lucie-de-Varennnes. She is of noble descent and is possessed of ten thousand francs a year in her own right. As to her charms, you have but to observe for yourself. If the inventory pleases your shepherd's heart, she becomes your wife at a word. Do not interrupt me. To-night I conveyed her to the *Chateau*⁴ of the *Comte*⁵ de-Villemaur, to whom her hand had been promised.

Guests were present ; the priest was waiting ; her marriage to one eligible in rank and fortune was ready to be accomplished. At the altar Mademoiselle, so meek and dutiful, turned upon me like a leopardess, charged me with cruelty and crimes, and broke, before the gaping priest the troth I had plighted for her. I swore there and then, by ten thousand devils, that she should marry the first man we met after leaving the Chateau, be he prince, charcoal burner, or thief. You, shepherd, are the first. Mademoiselle must be wed this night. If not you, then another. You have ten minutes in which to make your decision. Do not vex me with words or questions. Ten minutes, shepherd ; and they are speeding."

The marquis drummed loudly with his white fingers upon the table. He sank into a veiled attitude of waiting. It was as if some great house had shut its doors and windows against approach. David would have spoken, but the huge man's bearing stopped his tongue. Instead, he stood by the lady's chair and bowed.

"Mademoiselle," he said, and he marvelled to find his words flowing easily before so much elegance and beauty. "You have heard me say I was a shepherd. I have also had the fancy, at times, that I am a poet. If it be the test of a poet to adore and cherish the beautiful, that fancy is now strengthened. Can I serve you in any way, Mademoiselle ?"

The young woman looked up at him with eyes dry and mournful. His frank glowing face, made serious

by the gravity of the adventure, his strong, straight figure and the liquid sympathy in his blue eyes, perhaps, also, her imminent need of long-denied help and kindness, thawed her to sudden tears.

"Monsieur," she said, in low tones, "you look to be true and kind. He is my uncle, the brother of my father, and my only relative. He loved my mother, and he hates me because I am like her. He has made my life one long terror. I am afraid of his very looks, and never before dared to disobey him. But to-night he would have married me to a man three times my age. You will forgive me for bringing this vexation upon you, Monsieur. You will, of course, decline this mad act he tries to force upon you. But let me thank you for your generous words, at least. I have had none spoken to me for so long."

There was now something more than generosity in the poet's eyes. This fine new loveliness held him with its freshness and grace. The subtle perfume from her filled him with strange emotions. His tender look fell warmly upon her. She leaned to it, thirstily.

"Ten minutes," said David, "are given to me in which to do what I would devote years to achieve. I will not say I pity you, it would not be true; I love you. I cannot ask for love from you yet, but let me rescue you from this cruel man, and, in time, love may come. I think I have a future; I shall not always be a shepherd. For the present I will cherish you with all my heart and make your life less sad.

Will you trust your fate to me, Mademoiselle ?”

“Ah, you would sacrifice yourself from pity !”

“From love. The time is almost up, Mademoiselle.

“I will live only to make you happy, and myself worthy of you.”

Her fine small hand crept into his from beneath her cloak.

“I will trust you.” she breathed, with my life. And—and love—may not be so far off as you think. Tell him. Once away from the power of his eyes I may forget.”

David went and stood before the marquis. The figure stirred, and the mocking eyes glanced at the great hall clock.

“Two minutes to spare. A shepherd requires eight minutes to decide whether he will accept a bride of beauty and income ! Speak up, shepherd, do you consent to become Mademoiselle’s husband ?”

“Mademoiselle,” said David, standing proudly, “has done me the honour to yield to my request that she will become my wife.”

“Well said !” said the marquis. You have yet the making of a courtier in you, master shepherd. Mademoiselle could have drawn a worse prize, after all. And now to be done with the affair as quick as the Church and the devil will allow.

He struck the table soundly with his sword hilt. The landlord came, knee-shaking, bringing more candles in the hope of anticipating the great lord’s whims. “Fetch a priest,” said the marquis. “a priest,

do you understand? In ten minutes have a priest here, or—."

The landlord dropped his candles and fled.

The priest came, heavy-eyed and ruffled. He made David Mignot and Lucie de Varennes man and wife, pocketed a gold piece that the marquis tossed him and shuffled out again into the night.

"Wine," ordered the marquis, spreading his ominous fingers at the host.

"Fill glasses," he said, when it was brought. He stood up at the head of the table in the candle light a black mountain of venom and conceit, with something like the memory of an old love turned to poison in his eye, as it fell upon his niece.

"Monsieur Mignot," he said, raising his wine-glass, "drink after I say this to you. You have taken to be your wife one who will make your life a foul and wretched thing. The blood in her is an inheritance running black lies and red ruin. She will bring you shame and anxiety. There is your promise, poet, for a happy life. Drink your wine. At last, Mademoiselle, I am rid of you."

The marquis drank. A little grievous cry, as if from a sudden wound, came from the girl's lips. David with his glass in his hand, stepped forward three paces and faced the marquis. There was little of a shepherd in his bearing.

"Just now," he said calmly, "you did me the honour to call me 'Monsieur.' " May I hope, therefore, that my marriage to Mademoiselle has placed me somewhat nearer to you in—let us say, reflected

rank—has given me the right to stand more as an equal to Monseigneur in a certain little piece of business I have in my mind ?”

“You may hope, shepherd” sneered the marquis.

“Then,” said David, dashing the glass of wine into the contemptuous eyes that mocked him, “perhaps you will condescend to fight me.”

The fury of the great lord outbroke in one sudden curse like a blast from a horn. He tore his sword from its black sheath ; he called to the hovering landlord : “A sword there, for this lout !” He turned to the lady with a laugh that chilled her heart, and said : “You put much labour upon me, madame. It seems I must find you a husband and make you a widow in the same night.”

“I know not sword-play,” said David. He flushed to make the confession before his lady.

“I know not sword-play,” mimicked the marquis. “Shall we fight like peasants with oaken cudgels ? Francis, my pistols !”

A postillion brought two shining great pistols ornamented with carven silver, from the carriage holsters. The marquis tossed one upon the table near David’s hand. “To the other end of the table,” he cried ; “even a shepherd may pull a trigger. Few of them attain the honour to die by the weapon of a De Beaupertuys.”

The shepherd and the marquis faced each other from the ends of the long table. The landlord, in an agony of terror, clutched the air and stammered : “M—M—Mon—seigneur for the love of God ; not in my

house ; do not spill blood—it will ruin my custom—”
; The look of the marquis threatening him, paralysed his tongue.

“Coward” cried the lord of Beaupertuys, “cease *chattering your teeth*’ long enough to give the word for us to fire, if you can.”

Mine host’s knees smote the floor. He was without a vocabulary. Even sounds were beyond him. Still, by gestures he seemed to beseech peace in the name of his house and custom.

“I will give the word,” said the lady, in a clear voice. She went up to David and kissed him sweetly. Her eyes were sparkling brightly and colour had come to her cheek. She stood against the wall, and the two men levelled their pistols for her count.

“One——two——three !”

The two reports came so nearly together that the candles flickered but once. The marquis stood, smiling, the fingers of his left hand resting outspread upon the end of the table. David remained erect, and turned his head very slowly, searching for his wife with his eyes. Then, as a garment falls from where it it hung, he sank, crumpled, upon the floor.

With a little cry of terror and despair, the widowed maid ran and stooped above him. She found his wound, and then looked up with her old look of pale melancholy. “Through his heart,” she whispered. “Oh, his heart !”

“Come,” boomed the great voice of the marquis. “Out with you to the carriage : daybreak shall not find you on my hands. Wed you shall be again, and

to a living husband, this night. The next we come upon, my lady, highwayman or peasant. If the road yields no other, then the churl that opens my gates. Out with you to the carriage !”

The marquis implacable and huge, the lady wrapped again in the mystery of her cloak, the postilion bearing the weapons...all moved out to the waiting carriage. The sound of its ponderous wheels rolling away echoed through the slumbering village. In the hall of the Silver Flagon the distracted landlord wrung his hands above the slain poet's body, while the flames of the four and twenty candles danced and flickered on the table.

O. Henry.

THE TRUTH ABOUT PYECRAFT

HE sits not a dozen yards away. If I glance over my shoulder I can see him. And if I catch his eye—and usually I catch his eye—it meets me with an expression—.

It is mainly an imploring look—and yet with suspicion in it.

Confound his suspicion ! If I wanted to tell on him I should have told long ago. I don't tell and I don't tell, and he ought to feel at his ease. As if anything so gross and fat as he could feel at ease ! Who would believe me if I did tell ?

Poor old Pyecraft ! Great, uneasy jelly of substance ! The fattest clubman in London.

He sits at one of the little club tables in the huge bay by the fire, stuffing. What is he stuffing ? I glance judiciously and catch him biting at a round of hot buttered teacake, with his eyes on me. Confound him !—with his eyes on me !

That settles it, Pyecraft ! Since you will be abject, since you will behave as though I was not a man of honour, here, right under your embedded eyes, I write the thing down—the plain truth about Pyecraft. The man I helped, the man I shielded, and who has requited me by making my club unendurable, absolutely unendurable, with his liquid appeal, with the perpetual “don't tell” of his looks.

And, besides, why does he keep on eternally eating ?

Well, here goes for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth !

Pyecraft—I made the acquaintance of Pyecraft in this very smoking-room. I was a young, nervous new member and he saw it. I was sitting all alone, wishing I knew more of the members, and suddenly he came, a great rolling front of chins and abdomina, towards me and grunted and sat down in a chair close by me and *wheezed for a space*¹, and scraped for a space with a match and lit a cigar, and then addressed me. I forget what he said—something about the matches not lighting properly, and afterwards as he talked he kept stopping the waiters one by one as they went by, and telling them about the matches in that thin, fluty voice he has. But, anyhow, it was in some such way we began our talking.

He talked about various things and came round to game. And thence to my figure and complexion. "You ought to be good cricketer," he said, "I suppose I am slender, slender to what some people would call lean, and I suppose I am rather dark, still—I am not ashamed of having a Hindu great grandmother, but, for all that, I don't want casual strangers to see through me at a glance to her. So that I was set against Pyecraft from the beginning.

But he only talked about me in order to get to himself.....

"I expect," he said, "you take no more exercise than I do, and probably you eat no less." (Like all

excessively obese² people he fancied he ate nothing.)
 "Yet"—and he smiled an oblique smile—"We differ".

And then he began to talk about his fatness and all he did for his fatness ; and all he was going to do for his fatness ; what people had advised him to do for his fatness and what he had heard of people doing for fatness similar to his. "*A priori*³" he said, "one would think a question of nutrition could be answered by dietary and a question of assimilation by drugs. It was stifling. It was dumpling talk. It made me feel swelled to hear him.

One stands that sort of thing once in a way at a club, but a time came when I fancied I was standing too much. He took to me altogether too conspicuously. I could never go into the smoking-room but he would come wallowing towards me, and sometimes he came and gormandized round and about me while I had my lunch. He seemed at times almost to be clinging to me. He was a bore, but not so fearful a bore as to be limited to me ; and from the first there was something in his manner—almost as though he knew, almost as though he penetrated to the fact that I *might*—that there was a remote exceptional chance in me that no one else presented.

"I'd give anything to get it down," he would say—"anything," and peer at me over his vast cheeks and pant.

Poor old Pyecraft. He has just gonged, no doubt to order another buttered teacake !

He came to the actual thing one day. "Our Pharmacopoeia," he said, "our Western Pharmacopoeia, is

anything but the last word of medical science. In the East, I've been told - "

He stopped and stared at me. It was like being at an aquarium.

I was quite suddenly angry with him, "Look here," I said, "who told you about my great grandmother's recipes?"

"Well," he fancied.

"Every time we've met for a week," I said—"and we've met pretty often - you've given me a broad hint or so about that little secret of mine."

"Well," he said, "now the cat's out of the bag, I'll admit, yes, it is so, I had it—"

"From, Pattison?"

"Indirectly," he said, which I believe was lying, "yes."

"Pattison," I said, "took that stuff at his own risk."

He pursed his mouth and bowed.

"My great-grandmother's recipes," I said, "are queer things to handle. My father was near making me promise—"

"He didn't?"

"No. But he warned me. He himself used one—once."

"Ah!...But do you think—? Suppose—suppose there did happen to be one—"

"The things are curious documents," I said, "Even the smell of 'em...No!"

But after going so far Pyecraft was resolved I should go farther. I was always a little afraid if I

tried his patience too much he would fall on me: suddenly and smother me. I own I was weak. But I was also annoyed with Pyecraft. I had got to that state of feeling for him that disposed me to say, "Well, take the risk!" The little affair of Pattison to which I have alluded was a different matter altogether. What it was doesn't concern us now, but I knew, anyhow, that the particular recipe I used then was safe. The rest I didn't know so much about, and, on the whole, I was inclined to doubt their safety pretty completely.

Yet even if Pyecraft got poisoned—

I must confess the poisoning of Pyecraft struck me as an immense undertaking.

That evening I took that queer, odd-scented sandal-wood box out of my safe and turned the rustling skins over. The gentleman who wrote the recipes for my great-grandmother evidently had a weakness for skins of a miscellaneous origin, and his handwriting was cramped to the last degree. Some of the things are quite unreadable to me—though my family with its Indian Civil Service associations, has kept up a knowledge of Hindustani from generation to generation—and none are absolutely plain sailing. But I found the one that I knew was there soon enough, and sat on the floor by my safe for some time looking at it.

"Look here," said I to Pyecraft next day, and snatched the slip away from his eager grasp.

"So far as I can make it out, this is a recipe for Loss of Weight. ("Ah!" said Pyecraft.) I'm not

absolutely sure, but I think it's that. And if you take my advice you'll leave it alone. Because, you know—I blacken my blood in your interest, Pyecraft—my ancestors on that side were, so far as I can gather, a jolly queer lot. See?"

"Let me try it," said Pyecraft.

I leant back in my chair. My imagination made one mighty effort and fell flat within me. "What in Heaven's name, Pyecraft," I asked, "do you think you'll look like when you get thin?"

He was impervious to reason. I made him promise never to say a word to me about his disgusting fatness and again whatever happened—never, and there I handed him that little piece of skin,

"It's nasty stuff," I said.

"No matter," he said and took it.

He goggled at it. "But—but—" he said.

He had just discovered that it wasn't English.

"To the best of my ability," I said, "I will do you a translation."

I did my best. After that we didn't speak for a fortnight. Whenever he approached me I frowned and motioned him away, and he respected our compact, but the end of the fortnight he was as fat as ever. And then he got a word in.

"I must speak," he said, "It isn't fair. There's something wrong. It's done me no good. You're not doing your great-grandmother justice."

"Where's the recipe?"

He produced it gingerly from his pocket-book.

I ran my eye over the items. "Was the egg addled?" I asked.

"No, ought it to have been?"

"That," I said, "goes without saying in all my poor dear great-grandmother's recipes. When condition or quality is not specified you must get the worst. She was drastic or nothing...And there's one or two possible alternatives to some of these other things. You got *fresh* rattlesnake venom?"

"I got a rattlesnake from Jamrach's. It cost—it cost—."

"That's your affair, anyhow. This last item..."

"I know a man who—."

"Yes H'm. Well, I'll write the alternatives down. So far as I know the language, the spelling of this recipe is particularly atrocious. By-the-bye, dog here probably means pariah dog."

For a month after that I saw Pyecraft constantly at the club and as fat and anxious as ever. He kept our treaty, but at times he broke the spirit of it by shaking his head despondently. Then one day in the cloakroom he said, "Your great-grandmother..."

"Not a word against her," I said; and he held his peace.

I could have fancied he had desisted, and I saw him one day talking to three new members about his fatness as though he was in search of other recipes. And then quite unexpectedly his telegram came.

'Mr. Formalyn!' bawled a page-boy under my nose, and I took the telegram and opened it at once.

"For Heaven's sake come, Pyecraft."

"H'm," said I, and to tell the truth I was so pleased at the rehabilitation of my great-grandmother's reputation this evidently promised that I made a most excellent lunch.

I got Pyecraft's address from the hall porter. Pyecraft inhabited the upper half of a house in Bloomsbury, and I went there so soon as I had done my coffee and Trappistine. I did not wait to finish my cigar,

"Mr. Pyecraft?" said I, at the front door.

They believed he was ill; he hadn't been out for two days.

"He expects me," said I, and they sent me up.

I rang the bell at the lattice-door upon the landing.

"He shouldn't have tried it, anyhow," I said to myself. "A man who eats like a pig ought to look like a pig."

An obviously worthy woman, with an anxious face and a carelessly placed cap, came and surveyed me through the *lattice*.⁴

I gave my name and she opened his door for me in a dubious fashion,

"Well?" said I, as we stood together inside Pyecraft's piece of the landing.

"E said you was to come in if you came," she said, and regarded me, making no motion to show me anywhere. And then, confidentially, "E's locked in, sir."

"Locked in?"

"Locked himself in yesterday morning and 'asn't let any one in since, sir. And ever and again *swearing*. Oh, my !"

I stared at the door she indicated by her glances.
"In there ?" I said.

"Yes, sir."

"What's up ?"

She shook her head sadly. "'E keeps on calling for vittles, sir. 'Eavy vittles's wants. I get 'im what I can. Bork 'e's 'ad, sooit puddin', sossiges, noo bread. Everythink like that. Left outside, if you please, and me go away. 'E's eatin', sir, something *awful*."

There came a *piping bawl*⁵ from inside the door :
"That Formalyn ?"

"That you, Pyecraft ?" I shouted, and went and banged the door

"Tell her to go away."

I did.

Then I could hear a curious pattering upon the door, almost like some one feeling for the handle in the dark, and Pyecraft's familiar grunts.

"It's all right," I said "she's gone."

But for a long time the door didn't open.

I heard the key turn. Then Pyecraft's voice said :
"Come in."

I turned the handle and opened the door. Naturally I expected to see Pyecraft.

"Well, you know, he wasn't there !"

I never had such a shock in my life. There was his sitting-room in a state of untidy disorder, plates

and dishes among the books and writing things, and several chairs overturned, but Pyecraft.—

“It’s all right, o’man ; shut the door,” he said, and then I discovered him.

There he was right up close to the cornice in the corner by the door, as though some one had glued him to the ceiling. His face was anxious and angry. He panted and gesticulated, “Shut the door,” he said. “If that woman gets hold of it...”

I shut the door, and went and stood away from him and stared.

“If anything gives way and you tumble down,” I said, “you’ll break your neck, Pyecraft.”

“I wish I could,” he wheezed.

“A man of your age and weight getting up to kiddish gymnastics.....”

“Don’t,” he said, and looked agonized, “Your damned great-grandmother.....”

“Be careful,” I warned him.

“I’ll tell,” he said, and gesticulated.

“How the deuce,” said I, “are you holding on up there ?”

And then abruptly I realized that he was not holding on at all, that he was floating up there—just as a gas-filled bladder might have floated in the same position. He began a struggle to thrust himself away from the ceiling and to clamber down the wall to me. “It’s that prescription,” he panted, as he did so, “Your great-gran.....”

“No !” I cried.

He took hold of a framed engraving rather carelessly as he spoke and it gave way, and he flew back to the ceiling again, while the picture smashed on to the sofa. Bump he went against the ceiling, and I knew then why he was all over white on the more salient curves and angles of his person. He tried again more carefully coming down by way of the mantel.

It was really most extraordinary spectacle, that great, fat, apoplectic-looking man upside down and trying to get from the ceiling to the floor. "That prescription," he said. "Too successful."

"How?"

"Loss of weight—almost complete."

And then, of course, I understood.

"By Jove i Pyecraft," said I, "what you wanted was a cure for fatness! But you always called it weight. You would call it weight."

Somehow I was extremely delighted. I quite liked Pyecraft for the time. "Let me help you!" I said, and took his hand and pulled him down. He kicked about, trying to get foothold somewhere. It was very like holding a flag on a windy day.

"That table," he said, pointing, "is solid mahogany and very heavy. If you can put me under that—."

I did, and there he wallowed about like a captive balloon, while I stood on his hearthrug and talked to him.

I lit the cigar. "Tell me," I said, "what happened?"

"I took it," he said.

"How did it taste?"

"Oh, *beastly*!"

I should fancy they all did. Whether one regards the ingredients or the probable compound or the possible results, almost all my great-grandmother's remedies appear to me at least to be extraordinarily uninviting. For my own part—

"I took a little sip first."

"Yes?"

"And as I felt lighter and better after an hour, I decided to take the draught."

"My dear Pyecraft!"

"I held my nose," he explained. "And then I kept on getting lighter and lighter—and helpless, you know."

He gave way suddenly to a burst of passion. "What the goodness am I to do?" he said.

"There's one thing pretty evident," I said, "that you mustn't do. If you go out of doors you'll go up and up." I waved an arm upward. "They'd have to send *Santos Dumont*⁶ after you to bring you down again."

"I suppose it will wear off?"

I shook my head. "I don't think you can count on that," I said.

And then there was another burst of passion, and he kicked out at adjacent chairs and banged the floor. He behaved just as I should have expected a great, fat, self-indulgent man to behave under trying circumstances—that is to say, very badly. He

spoke of me and of my great-grandmother with an utter want of discretion.

"I never asked you to take the stuff," I said.

And generously disregarding the insults he was putting upon me, I sat down in his armchair and began to talk to him in a sober, friendly fashion.

I pointed out to him that this was a trouble he had brought upon himself, and that it had almost an air of poetical justice. He had eaten too much. This he disputed, and for a time we argued the point.

He became noisy, violent, so I desisted from this aspect of his lesson. "And then," said I, "you committed the sin of *euphuism*⁷. You called it, not Fat, which is just and inglorious, but Weight. You—"

He interrupted to say that he recognized all that. What was he to do?

I suggested he should adapt himself to his new conditions. So we came to the really sensible part of the business. I suggested that it would not be difficult for him to learn to walk about on the ceiling with his hands.....

"I can't sleep," he said.

But that was no great difficulty. It was quite possible, I pointed out, to make a shake-up under a wire mattress, fasten the under things on with tapes, and have a blanket, sheet, and coverlet to button at the side. He would have to confide in his house-keeper, I said; and after some squabbling he agreed to that. (Afterwards it was quite delightful to see the beautifully matter-of-fact way with which the

good lady took all these amazing inversions). He could have a library ladder in his room, and all his meals could be laid on the top of his bookcase. We also hit on an ingenious device by which he could get to the floor whenever he wanted, which was simply to put the *British Encyclopaedia* (tenth edition) on the top of his open shelves. He just pulled out a couple of volumes and held on, and down he came. And we agreed there must be iron staples along the skirting, so that he could cling to those whenever he wanted to get about the room on the lower level.

As we got on with the thing I found myself almost keenly interested. It was I who called in the house-keeper and broke matters to her, and it was I chiefly who fixed up the inverted bed. In fact I spent two whole days at his flat. I am a handy, interfering sort of man with a screw driver, and I made all sorts of ingenious adaptations for him—ran a wire to bring his bells within reach, turned all his electric lights up instead of down, and so on. The whole affair was extremely curious and interesting to me, and it was delightful to think of Pyecraft like some great, fat blow-fly, crawling about on his ceiling and clambering round the lintel of his doors from one room to another, and never, never, never, coming to the club any more.

Then, you know, my fatal ingenuity got the better of me. I was sitting by his fire drinking his whisky, and he was up in his favourite corner by the cornice, tacking a Turkey carpet to the ceiling, when

the idea struck me. "By Jove ! Pyecraft," I said, "all this is totally unnecessary."

And before I could calculate the complete consequences of my notion I blurted it out. "Lead under-clothing," said I, and the mischief was done.

Pyecraft received the thing almost in tears. "To be right ways up again....." he said.

I gave him the whole secret before I saw where it would take me. "Buy sheet lead," I said, "stamp it into discs. Sew'em all over your underclothes until you have enough. Have lead-soled boots, carry a bag of solid lead, and the thing is done ! Instead of being a prisoner here you may go abroad again, Pyecraft : you may travel..."

A still happier idea came to me. "You need never fear a shipwreck. All you need do is just slip off some or all of your clothes, take the necessary amount of luggage in your hand, and float up in the air....." In his emotion he dropped the tack-hammer within an ace of my head. "By Jove !" he said, "I shall be able to come back to the club again."

The thing pulled me up short. "By Jove" ! I said, faintly. "Yes. Of course.....you will."

He did. He does. There he sits behind me now, stuffing—as I live !—a third go of buttered teacake. And no one in the whole world knows—except his housekeeper and me—that he weighs practically nothing ; that he is a mere boring mass of assimilatory matter, mere clouds in clothing, *niente, nefas*,⁸ the most inconsiderable of men. There he sits watching until I have done this writing. Then, if he can,

he will waylay me. He will come billowing up to me.....

He will tell me over again all about it, how it feels, how it doesn't feel, how he sometimes hopes it is passing off a little. And always somewhere in that fat, abundant discourse he will say, "The secret's keeping, eh? If any one knew of it—I should be so ashamed..... Makes a fellow look such a fool, you know. Crawling about on a ceiling and all that—....."

And now to elude Pyecraft, occupying, as he does, an admirable strategic position between me and the door.

H. G. Wells.

JEEVES AND THE YULETIDE SPIRIT

..... The Letter arrived on the morning of the sixteenth. I was pushing a bit of breakfast into the Wooster face at the moment ; and, feeling fairly well fortified with coffee and *kippers*¹, I decided to break the news to Jeeves without delay. As Shakespeare says, if you're going to do a thing you might just as well pop right at it and get it over. The man would be disappointed, of course, and possibly even chagrined ; but dash it all, a spot of disappointment here and there does a fellow good. Makes him realize that life is stern and life is earnest.

"Oh, Jeeves," I said.

"Sir ?"

"We have here a communication from Lady Wikham. She has written inviting me to Skeldings for the festivities. So will you see about bunging the necessaries together ? We repair thither on the twenty-third. We shall be there some little time, I expect."

There was a pause. I could feel he was directing a frosty gaze at me, but I dug into the marmalade and refused to meet it.

"I thought I understood you to say, sir, that you proposed to visit Monte Carlo immediately after Christmas."

"I know. But that's all off. Plan changed."

At this point the telephone bell rang, tiding over

nicely what had threatened to be an awkward moment, Jeeves unhooked the receiver.

"Yes?..... Yes, madam..... Very good, madam, Here is Mr. Wooster." He handed me the instrument. "Mrs. Spenser Gergson, sir."

You know, every now and then I can't help feeling that Jeeves is losing his grip. In his prime it would have been with him the work of a moment to have told my aunt Agatha that I was not at home. I gave him one of those reproachful glances, and took the machine.

"Hullo?" I said, "Yes? Yes? Yes? Bertie speaking, Hullo? Hullo? Hullo?"

"Don't keep on saying, Hullo," yipped the old relative in her customary curt manner. "You're not a parrot. Sometimes I wish you were, because then you might have a little sense."

Quite the wrong sort of tone to adopt toward a fellow in the early morning, of course, but what can one do?

"Bertie, Lady Wickham tells me she has invited you to Skeldings for Christmas. Are you going?"

"Rather!"

"Well, mind you behave yourself. Lady Wickham is an old friend of mine."

"I shall naturally endeavour, Aunt Agatha," I replied stiffly, "to conduct myself in a manner befitting an English gentleman paying a visit....."

"What did you say? Speak up. I can't hear."

"I said, 'right ho.'"

"Oh? Well, mind you do. And there's another reason why I particularly wish you to be as little of an imbecile as you can manage while at Skeldings. Sir Roderick Glossop will be there."

"What!"

"Don't bellow like that."

"Did you say Sir Roderick Glossop?"

"I did."

"You don't mean Tuppy Glossop?"

"I mean Sir Roderick Glossop, which was my reason for saying Sir Roderick Glossop. Now, Bertie, I want you to listen to me attentively. Are you there?"

"Yes, still here."

"Well, then, listen I have at last succeeded, after incredible difficulty and in the face of all the evidence, in almost persuading Sir Roderick that you are not actually insane. He is prepared to suspend judgment until he has seen you once more. On your behaviour at Skeldings, therefore—."

But I had hung the receiver, Shaken. That's what I was. *S. to the core*².

The Glossop was formidable old bird with a bald head and outsize eyebrows, by profession a loony-doctor. How it happened, I couldn't tell you to this day, but I once got engaged to his daughter Honoria, a ghastly dynamic exhibit who read Nietzsche and had a laugh like waves breaking on a stern and rockbound coast. The fixture was scratched, owing to events occurring which convinced the old boy that I was off my napper; and since then he has always

had my name at the top of his list of Loonies I have lunched with.

"Jeeves," I said, all of a twitter, "do you know what? Sir Roderick Glossop is going to be at Lady Wickham's."

"Very good, sir, if you have finished breakfast I will clear away."

Cold and haughty. No sympathy. None of the rallying around spirit which one likes to see. As I had anticipated, Jeeves had been looking forward to a little flutter at the tables. We Woosters can wear the mask. I ignored his lack of decent feeling.

"Do so, Jeeves," I said proudly.

Going down to Skeldings in the car on the afternoon on the twenty-third, Jeeves was aloof and reserved. And before dinner on the first night of my visit he put the studs in my dress shirt in what I can only call a marked manner. The whole thing was extremely painful, and it seemed to me, as I lay in bed on the morning of the twenty-fourth, that the only step to take was to put the whole facts of the case before him and trust to his native good sense to effect an understanding.

My hostess, Lady Wickham, was a beaky female built for too closely on the lines of my Aunt Agatha for comfort; but she had seemed matey enough on my arrival. Her daughter Roberta had welcomed me with a warmth which, I'm bound to say, had set the old heart-strings fluttering a bit. And Sir Roderick, in the brief moment we had together, had said, "Ha, young man?" not particularly *chummily*³, but he had said it; and my view was that it prac-

tically amounted to the lion lying down with the lamb.

So, all in all, life at this juncture seemed pretty well all to the mustard, and I decided to tell Jeeves exactly how matters stood.

"Jeeves," I said, as he appeared with the steaming.

"Sir?"

"I'm afraid scratching that Monte Carlo trip has been a bit of a jar for you, Jeeves."

"Not at all, sir."

"Oh, yes, it has. The heart was set on wintering in the world's good old plague spot, I know. I saw your eye light up when I said we were due for a visit there. You snorted a bit and your fingers twitched. I know, I know. And now that there has been a change of programme, the iron had entered into your soul."

"Not at all, sir."

"Oh, yes, it has. I've seen it. Very well, then. What I wish to impress upon you, Jeeves, is that it was through no light and airy caprice that I accepted this invitation to Lady Wickham's. I have been angling for it for weeks, prompted by many considerations. It was imperative that I should come to Skeldings for Christmas, Jeeves, because I knew that young Tuppy Glossop was going to be here."

"Sir Roderick Glossop, sir?"

"His nephew. You may have observed hanging about the place a fellow with light hair and a Cheshire cat grin. That is Tuppy, and I have been anxious

for some time to get to grips with him. The Wooster honour is involved."

I took a sip of tea, for the mere memory of my wrongs had shaken me.

"In spite of the fact that young Tuppy is the nephew of Sir Roderick Glossop, at whose hands, Jeeves, as you are aware, I have suffered much, I fraternized with him freely. I said to myself that a man is not to be blamed for his relations, and that I should hate to have my pals hold my aunt Agatha, for instance, against me. Broad-minded, Jeeves, I think?"

"Extremely, sir."

"Well, then, as I say, I sought this Tuppy out, Jeeves, and hobnobbed; and what do you think he did?"

"I could not say, sir."

"I will tell you. One night, after dinner at the Drones Club, he bet me I couldn't swing myself across the swimming bath by the ropes and rings. I took him on, and was buzzing along in great style until I came to the last ring. And then I found that this fiend in human shape had looped it back against the rail, thus leaving me hanging in the void with no means of getting ashore to my home and loved ones.

"There was nothing for it but to drop into the water. And what I maintain, Jeeves, is that if I can't get back at him somehow at Skeldings—with all the vast resources which a country house affords at my disposal—I am not the man I was."

"I see, sir."

"And now, Jeeves, we come to the most important reason why I had to spend Christmas at Skelding. "Jeeves," I said, diving into the old cup once more for a moment and bringing myself out wreathed in blushes, "the fact of the matter is, I'm in love."

"Indeed, sir?"

"You've seen Miss Roberta Wickham?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, then."

There was a pause while I let it sink in.

"During your stay here, Jeeves," I said, "You will no doubt, be thrown a good deal together with Miss Wickham's maid. On such occasions pitch it strong."

"Sir?"

"You know what I mean. Tell her I'm rather a good chap. Mention my hidden depths. These things get round. A boost is never wasted, Jeeves."

"Very good, sir. But—"

"But what?"

"Well, sir—"

"Carry on, Jeeves. We are always glad to hear from you, always."

"What I was about to remark, if you will excuse me, sir, was that I would scarcely have thought Miss Wickham a suitable—"

"Jeeves," I said coldly, "what is your kick against Miss Wickham?"

"Oh really, sir!"

"Jeeves, I insist. This is a time for plain speaking. You have beefed about Miss Wickham. I wish

to know why."

"It merely crossed my mind, sir, that for a gentleman of your description Miss Wickham is not a suitable mate."

"What do you mean by a gentleman of my description?"

"I beg your pardon, sir. The expression escaped advertently. I was about to observe, sir, that, though Miss Wickham is a charming young lady—"

"There, Jeeves, you spoke an imperial quart. What eyes!"

"Yes, sir,"

"What hair!"

"Very true, sir."

"And what espieglerie—if that's the word I want."

"The exact word, sir."

"All right, then, Carry on."

"I grant Miss Wickham the possession of all these desirable qualities, sir. Nevertheless, considered as a matrimonial prospect for a gentleman of your description, I cannot look upon her as suitable. In my opinion, Miss Wickham lacks seriousness, sir. She is too volatile and frivolous. To qualify as Miss Wickham's husband, a gentleman would need to possess a commanding personality and considerable strength of character."

"Exactly!"

"I would always hesitate to recommend as a life's companion a young lady with such a vivid shade of red hair. Red hair, sir, is dangerous."

I eyed the blighter squarely.

"Jeeves," I said, "you're talking rot."

"Very good, sir."

"Absolute drivel."

"Very good, sir."

"Pure mashed potatoes."

"Very good, sir."

"Very good, sir—I mean very good, Jeeves ; that will be all," I said.

And I drank a modicum of tea with a good deal of hauteur.

It isn't often that I find myself able to prove Jeeves in the wrong ; but by dinner time that night I was in a position to do so, and I did it without delay.

"Touching on that matter we were touching on Jeeves," I said, coming in from the bath and tackling him as he studded the shirt, "I should be glad if you give me your careful attention for a moment. I warn you that what I am about to say is going to make you look pretty silly."

"Indeed, sir ?"

"Yes, Jeeves. Pretty dashed silly it's going to make you look. This morning, if I remember rightly, you stated that Miss Wickham was volatile, frivolous and lacking in seriousness. Am I correct ?"

"Quite correct, sir."

"Then what I have to tell you may cause you to alter that opinion. I went for a walk with Miss Wickham this afternoon ; and, as we walked I told her about what young Tuppy Glossop did to me in the swimming bath at the Drones. She hung upon my words, Jeeves, and was full of sympathy."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Dripping with it, And that's not all. Almost before I had finished she was suggesting the ripest, fruitiest, brainiest scheme for bringing young Tuppy's gray hairs in sorrow to the grave that anyone could possibly imagine."

"That is very gratifying, sir,"

"'Gratifying' is the word. It appears that at the school where Miss Wickham was educated, Jeeves, it used to become necessary from time to time for the right-thinking element to slip it across certain of the baser sort. Do you know what they did, Jeeves?"

"No, sir."

"They took a long stick, Jeeves, and—follow me closely here—they tied a darning needle to the end of it. Then, at dead of night, it appears, they sneaked into the party of the second part's cubicle and shoved the needle through the bed-clothes and punctured her hot-water bottle."

"Girls are much subtler in these matters than boys, Jeeves. At my old school one would occasionally heave a jug of water over another bloke during the night watches, but we never thought of affecting the same result in this particularly neat and scientific manner."

"Well, Jeeves, that was the scheme which Miss Wickham suggested I should work on young Tuppy, and that is the girl you call frivolous and lacking in seriousness. Any girl who can think up a wheeze like that is my idea of a helpmate."

"I shall be glad, Jeeves, if by the time I come to bed tonight you have been waiting for me in this

room a stout stick with a good sharp darning needle attached.

"Well, sir—"

I raised my hand.

"Jeeves," I said, "not another word. Stick, one, and needle, darning, good, sharp, one, without fail, in this room at eleven-thirty to-night."

"Very good, sir."

"Have you any idea where young Tuppy sleeps?"

"I could ascertain, sir."

"Do so, Jeeves."

In a few minutes he was back with the necessary informash.

"Mr. Glossop is established in the Moat Room, sir."

"Where is that?"

"The second door on the floor below, sir."

"Right ho, Jeeves. Are the studs in my shirt?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the links also?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then push me into it."

The task to which I had set myself was one that involved hardship and discomfort, for it meant sitting up till well into the small hours, and then padding down cold corridor. But I did not shrink from it. After all there is lot to be said for family tradition. We Woosters did our bit in the Crusades.

It being Christmas Eve, there was, as I had foreseen, a good deal of revelry and what not; so that it

wasn't till past one that I got to my room. Allowing, for everything, it didn't seem that it was going to be safe to start my little expedition till half-past two at the earliest; and I'm bound to say that it was only the utmost resolution that kept me from smuggling into the sheets and calling it a day. I'm not much of a lad now for late hours.

However, by half-past two everything appeared to be quiet. I shook off the mists of sleep, grabbed the good old stick and needle, and was off along the corridor. And presently pausing outside the Moat Room, I turned the handle, found the door wasn't locked, and went in.

At first, when I had beetled in, the room had seemed as black as a coal cellar; but after a bit things began to lighten. The curtains weren't quite drawn over the window, and I could see a trifle of the scenery here and there.

The bed was opposite the window, with the head against the wall and the end where the feet were jutting out towards where I stood, thus rendering it possible, after one had sown the seed, so to speak, to make a quick get away.

There only remained now the rather tricky problem of locating the old hot-water bottle. I meant to say, the one thing you can't do if you want to carry a job like this through with secrecy and dispatch is to stand at the end of a fellow's bed, jabbing at random.

I was a good deal cheered, at this juncture, to hear a fruity snore from the direction of the pillows. Reason told me that a bloke who could snore like

that wasn't going to be awakened by a trifle. I edged forward and ran a hand in a gingerly sort of way over the coverlet. A moment later I had found the bulge, I steered the good old darning needle on to it, gripped the stick, and shoved. Then, pulling out the weapon, I sidled towards the door, and in another moment would have been outside, buzzing for home and the good night rest, when suddenly there was a crash that sent my spine shooting up through the top of my head, and the contents of the bed sat up like a jack-in-the-box and said :

"Who's that ?"

It just shows how your most careful strategic moves can be the very ones that dish your campaign. In order to facilitate the orderly retreat according to plan, I had left the door open, and the beastly thing had slammed like a bomb.

But I wasn't giving much thought to the causes of the explosion. What was disturbing me was the discovery that, whoever else the bloke in the bed might be, he was not young Tuppy. Tuppy has one of those high, squeaky voices that sound like the tenor of the village choir failing to hit a high note. This one was something in between the last trump and a tiger calling for breakfast after being on a diet for a day or two. It was the sort of nasty, rasping voice you hear shouting "Fore !" when you're one of a slow foursome on the links and are holding up a couple of retired colonels.

I did not linger. Getting swiftly off the mark, I dived for the door handle, and was off and away,

banging the door behind me. I may be a chump in many ways, as my aunt Agatha will freely attest, but I knew when and when not to be among those present.

And I was just about to do the stretch of corridor leading to the stairs in a split second under the record time for the course, when something brought me up with a sudden jerk. An irresistible force was holding me straining at leash, as it were.

You know, sometimes it seems to me as if Fate were going out of its way to such an extent to snoot-er you that you wonder if it's worth while to struggle. The night being a trifle chillier than the dickens, I had donned for this expedition a dressing gown. It was the tail of this infernal garment that had caught in the door and piped me at the eleventh hour.

The next moment the door had opened, light was streaming through it, and the bloke with the voice had grabbed me by the arm.

It was Sir Roderick Glossop.

For about three and a quarter seconds, or possibly more, we just stood there, drinking each other in, so to speak, the old boy still attached with a limpet-like grip to my elbow. If I hadn't been in a dressing gown and he in pink pajamas with a blue stripe, and if he hadn't been glaring quite so much as if he were shortly going to commit a murder, the tableau would have looked rather like one of those advertisements you see in the magazines, where the experienced elder is patting the young man's arm and saying to him, "My boy, if you subscribe to the Mutt-Jeff

Correspondence School of Oswego, Kansas, as I did, you may some day, like me, become Third Assistant Vice President of the Schenectady Consolidated Nail File and Eyebrow Tweezer Corporation."

"You !" said Sir Roderick finally. And in this connection I want to state that it's all rot to say you can't hiss a word that hasn't an s in it. The way he pushed out that "You !" sounded like an angry cobra.

By rights, I suppose at this point I ought to have said something. The best I could manage, however, was a faint, soft, bleating sound.

"Come in here," he said, lugging me into the room. "We don't want to wake the whole house. Now," he said, depositing me on the carpet and closing the door, and doing a bit of eyebrow work, "kindly inform me what is this latest manifestation of insanity ?"

It seemed to me that a light and cheery laugh might help. So I had a pop at one.

"Don't gibber !" said my genial host. And I'm bound to admit that the light and cheery hasn't come out quite as I'd intended.

I pulled myself together with a strong effort.

"Awfully sorry about all this," I said in a hearty sort of voice, "The fact is, I thought you were Tuppy."

"Kindly refrain from inflicting your idiotic slang on me. What do you mean by the adjective 'tuppy' ?"

"It isn't so much an adjective, don't you know. More of a noun, I should think, if you examine it

squarely. What I mean to say is, I thought you were your nephew."

"You thought I was my nephew? Why should I be my nephew?"

"What I'm driving at is I thought this was his room?"

"My nephew and I changed rooms. I have a great dislike sleeping on an upper floor. I am nervous about fire."

For the first time since this interview had started I braced up a trifle. I lost that sense of being a toad under the harrow which had been cramping my style up till now. I even went so far as to eye this pink-pajamaed poltroon with a good deal of contempt and loathing. Just because he had this craven fear of fire and this selfish preference for letting Tuppy be cooked instead of himself, should the emergency occur, my nicely reasoned plans had gone up the spout. I gave him a look, and I think I may even have snorted a bit.

"I should have thought that your manservant would have informed you," said Sir Roderick, "that we contemplated making this change. I met him shortly before luncheon and told him to tell you."

This extraordinary statement staggered me. That Jeeves had been aware all along that this old crumb would occupy the bed which I was proposing to prod with darning needles and had let me rush upon my doom without a word of warning was almost beyond belief. You might say I was aghast. Yes, practically aghast.

"You told Jeeves that you were going to sleep in this room?" I gasped.

"I did. I was aware that you and my nephew were on terms of intimacy, and I wished to spare myself the possibility of a visit from you. I confess that it never occurred to me that such a visit was to be anticipated at three o'clock in the morning. What the devil do you mean," he barked, suddenly hotting up, "by prowling about the house at this hour? And what is that thing in your hand?"

I looked down, and found that I was still grasping the stick. I give you my honest word that, what with the maelstrom of emotions into which his revelation about Jeeves had cast me, the discovery came as an absolute surprise.

"This?" I said. "Oh, yes."

"What do you mean, 'Oh, yes?' What is it?"

"Well, it's a long story."

"We have the night before us."

"T's this way: I will ask you to picture me some weeks ago, perfectly peaceful and inoffensive, after dinner at the Drones, smoking a thoughtful cigarette and—"

I broke off. The man wasn't listening. He was goggling in a papt sort of way at the end of the bed, from which there had now begun to drip on to the carpet a series of drops.

"Good heavens!"

"—Thoughtful cigarette and chatting pleasantly of this and that—"

I broke off again. He had lifted the sheets and was gazing at the corpse of the hot-water bottle.

"Did you do this?" he said in a low, strangled sort of voice.

"Er—yes. As a matter of fact, yes. I was just going to tell you—."

"And your aunt tried to persuade me that you are not insane!"

"I'm not. Absolutely not. If you'll just let me explain—."

"I will do nothing of the kind."

"It all began—."

"Silence!"

"Right ho."

He did some deep-breathing exercises.

"My bed is drenched!"

"Be quiet!" He heaved somewhat for a while. "You wretched, miserable idiot," he said, "Kindly inform me which bedroom you are supposed to be occupying."

"It's on the floor above. The Clock Room."

"Thank you. I will find it."

"Eh?"

He gave me the eyebrow.

"I propose," he said "to pass the remainder of the night in your room, where I presume, there is a bed in a condition to be slept in. You may bestow yourself as comfortably as you can here. I will wish you good night."

He buzzed off, leaving me flat.

Well, we Woosters are old campaigners. We can take the rough with the smooth. But to say that I liked the prospect now before me would be palter-

ing with the truth. One glance at the bed told me that any idea of sleeping there was out. A goldfish could have done it, but not Bertram. After a bit of look round I decided that the best chance of getting any night's rest was to doze as well as I could in the armchair. I pinched a couple of pillows off the bed, shoved the hearth rug over my knees, and sat down and started counting sheep.

But it wasn't any good. The old lemon was sizzling much too much to admit of anything in the nature of slumber. This hideous revelation of the blackness of Jeeves's treachery kept coming back to me every time I nearly succeeded in dropping off. I was just wondering if I would ever get to sleep again in this when a voice at my elbow said, "Good morning, sir," and I sat up with a jerk.

I could have sworn I hadn't so much as dozed off for even a minute ; but apparently I had. For the curtains were drawn back and daylight was coming in through the window, and there was Jeeves with a cup of tea on a tray.

"Merry Christmas, sir !"

I reached out a feeble hand for the restoring brew. I swallowed a mouthful or two, and felt a little better. I was aching in every limb, and the dome felt like lead ; but I was now able to think with a certain amount of clearness, and I fixed the man with a stony eye and prepared to let him have it.

"You think so, do you ?" I said. "Much, let me tell you, depends on what you mean by the adjective 'merry'. If, moreover, you suppose that it is going to

be merry for you, correct that impression. Jeeves," I said, taking another half oz. of tea and speaking in a cold, measured voice, "I wish to ask you one question. Did you or did you not know that Sir Roderick Glossop was sleeping in this room last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"You admit it!"

"Yes, sir."

"And you didn't tell me!"

"No, sir. I thought it would be more judicious not to do so."

"Jeeves—"

"If you will allow me to explain, sir."

"Explain."

"I was aware that my silence might lead to something in the nature of an embarrassing contretemps, sir—"

"You thought that, did you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You were a good guesser," I said sucking down further bohea.

"But it seemed to me, sir, that whatever might occur was all for the best."

I would have put in a crisp word or two here, but he carried on without giving me the opp.

"I thought that possibly, on reflection, sir, your views being what they are, you would prefer your relations with Sir Roderick Glossop and his family to be distant rather than cordial."

"My views? What do you mean, 'my views'?"

"As regards a matrimonial alliance with Miss Honoria Glossop, sir."

Something like an electric shock seemed to zip through me. The man had opened up a new line of thought. I suddenly saw what he was driving at, and realized all in a flash that I had been wronging his faithful fellow. All the while I supposed he had been landing me in the soup he had really been stirring me away from it.

It was like those stories one used to read as a kid, about the traveller going along on a dark night, and his dog grabs him by the leg of his trousers, and he says, "Down, sir ! What are you doing, Rover ?" And the dog hangs on, and he gets rather hot under the collar and curses a bit, but the dog won't let him go, and then suddenly the moon shines through the clouds and he finds he's been standing on the edge of a precipice and one more step would have—well, anyway, you get the idea. And what I'm driving at is that much the same thing seemed to be happening now.

I give you my honest word, it had never struck me till this moment that my aunt Agatha had been scheming to get me in right with Sir Roderick so that I should eventually be received back into the fold, if you see what I mean, and subsequently pushed off on Honoria.

"My God, Jeeves !" I said, paling.

"Precisely, sir."

"You think there was a risk ?"

"I do, sir. A very grave risk."

A disturbing thought struck me.

"But, Jeeves, on calm reflection, won't Sir Roderick have gathered by now that my objective was young Tuppy, and that puncturing his hot-water bottle was just one of those things that occur when the Yuletide spirit is abroad—one of those things that have to be overlooked and taken with the indulgent smile and the fatherly shake of the head? What I mean is, he'll realise that I wasn't trying to snooter him, and then all the good work will have been wasted."

"No, sir, I fancy not. That might possibly have been Sir Roderick's mental reaction, had it not been for the second incident."

"The second incident?"

"During the night, sir, while Sir Roderick was occupying your bed, somebody entered the room, pierced his hot-water bottle with some sharp instrument, and vanished in the darkness."

I could make nothing of this.

"What? Do you think I walked in my sleep?"

"No, sir. It was young Mr. Glossop who did it. I encountered him this morning, sir, shortly before he came here. He was in cheerful spirits, and inquired of me how you were fooling about the incident—not being aware that his victim had been Sir Roderick."

"But, Jeeves, what an amazing coincidence!"

"Sir?"

"Why, young Tuppy getting exactly the same idea as I did. Or, rather, as Miss Wickham did. You can't say that's not a miracle."

"Not altogether, sir. It appears that he received the suggestion from her."

"From Miss Wickham?"

"Yes, sir."

"You mean to say that, after she had put me up to the scheme of puncturing Tuppy's hot-water bottle she went off and tipped Tuppy off to puncturing mine."

"Precisely sir. She is a young lady with a keen sense of humour, sir."

I sat there—you might say, stunned. When I thought how near I had come to offering the Wooster heart and hand to a girl capable of double-crossing a strong man's honest love like that, I shivered.

"Are you cold, sir?"

"No, Jeeves. Just shuddering—"

"The occurrence, if I may take the liberty of saying so, sir, will perhaps lend colour to the view which I put forward yesterday that Miss Wickham, though in many respects a charming young lady—"

I raised the hand.

"Say no more, Jeeves," I replied. "Love is dead."

I brooded for a while.

"You've seen Sir Roderick this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did he seem?"

"A trifle feverish, sir."

"Feverish?"

A little emotional, sir. He expressed a strong desire to meet you, sir.

"What would you advise?"

"If you were to slip out by the back entrance, sir, it would be possible for you to make your way

across the field without being observed and reach the village. You could hire an automobile to take you to London. I could bring on your effects later in your own car."

"But London, Jeeves? Is any man safe? My aunt Agatha is in London."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then?"

He regarded me for a moment with a fathomless eye.

"I think the best plan, sir, would be for you to leave England, which is not pleasant at this time of the year, for some little while. I would not take the liberty of dictating your movements, sir, but, as you already have accommodations engaged on the Blue Train for Monte Carlo for the day after tomorrow—"

"But you cancelled the booking?"

"No, sir."

"I told you to."

"Yes, sir. It was remiss of me, but the matter slipped my mind."

"Oh?"

"Yes, sir"

"All right, Jeeves. Monte Carlo, ho, then."

"Very good, sir."

"It's lucky, as things have turned out, that you forgot to cancel that booking."

"Very fortunate indeed, sir. If you will wait here, sir, I will return to your room and procure a suit of clothes."

NOTES

1. A KASHMIR IDYLL

Mulk Raj Anand was born in Peshawar in 1907. In 1925 he won a research scholarship and studied philosophy in London and Cambridge. He obtained a Doctor's Degree and distinguished himself as an art critic. His two most famous novels are *The Untouchable* and *The Coolie*. These deal with social problems upon the correct solutions of which depends the future well-being of India. His short stories are comparatively few, but this exquisitely drawn picture of a Kashmiri labourer, who has fallen victim to a landlord's tyranny, is one of the best-known among his comparatively few short stories. *A Kashmir Idyll* brings home to us the evils of *begar* (forced labour), bureaucratic government and landlordism, and tells us how retribution visits one who is cruel towards the downtrodden underdog.

1. *Tailor-made*—dressed in a beautiful suit.
2. *Labyrinthine*—zigzag.
3. *Lout*—clown, an awkward fellow.
4. *Ribaldry*—obscene or indecent language.
5. *Delectation*—enjoyment.
6. *Histrionically*—like an actor acting on the stage.
7. *Livid*—of bluish leaden colour.

Questions

1. What is an *idyll*? Why is the story called *A Kashmir Idyll*?
2. Write a character-sketch of Nawab Zaffar Ullah.
3. What is the system of *begar*? How far are conditions different in the present-day Kashmir?

2. THE EDITOR

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore is a world famous figure. His is a versatile genius. His poems, especially the *Gitanjali*, are read and appreciated all the world over. Some of his dramas have also been staged in various European and American theatres. He is one of the greatest masters of the art of story-telling. His wonderful English prose, coloured by imagination and feeling, is alive with figures, similes and metaphors. *The Editor* is noted for its poetical style, its unity of impression and for its vivid characterization. The ending is highly suggestive.

1. *Farce*—a drama meant to excite laughter.
2. *To go to Jericho*—to go to the devil. Jericho is a town in Palestine.
3. *Ingenuity of insinuation*—skill in creating an impression or giving an idea indirectly and subtly.
4. *Excruciating satire*—a piece of writing holding up vice or folly to ridicule in a bitter way.
5. *Imputations*—attributing fault, etc., to a person.

Questions

1. What are the disadvantages in adopting the profession of an editor of a newspaper?

2. Write a brief summary of the story.

3. Write a note on the character of Probhā. What part does she play in the story?

3. RIP VAN WINKLE

Washington Irving (1783-1895) is a well-known writer of America. His best-known work is *The Sketch Book*, collection of stories, essays and reminiscences. He travelled far and wide not only in his own country, but also in Europe. Lacking inventive power, he collected local legends of many lands and turned them into delightful stories. He was the first American to win fame outside his own country. *Rip Van Winkle* is one of his master-pieces and has won wide renown for its author. It is based on a legend of New York State, in the interior of which, along the banks of the Hudson River, a small colony of Dutchmen settled very early in the history of the colonization of the North American Continent.

1. *Diedrich Knicker-bocker*—a fantastic Dutch name, invented by Irving, which means loose-fitting knee-breeches.

2. *Thylke*—the same.

3. *Hudson*—a river in America.

4. *Katskill*—mountains in America.

5. *Shingle-roofs*—roofs made of rectangular slips of wood.

6. *Peter Stuyversant*—a Dutch colonial Governor. After serving in India and elsewhere in Asia, he went to New York in 1697.

7. *Shoot marbles*—to flick them.

8. *Skirts*—the tails of his long coat.

9. *Tartar's lance*—the lance of the brave and strong fighters of Tartary in Central Asia.

10. *White bread or brown*—white bread was considered superior to any other kind of bread.

11. *By chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller*—These were days before railways or motor cars. Newspapers were scarce and very few people could afford to buy them. In such an isolated community legends spread easily and lasted long.

12. *Thy mistress*—your beloved.

13. *Flemish painting*—A painting from Flanders, earlier name for the territories now comprising the Kingdom of Belgium and Holland.

14. *Hollands*—a wine made from grain.

15. *Nine-pins*—a game of skittles which is played with nine pins or wooden pegs.

16. *Firelock*—a musket in which priming was ignited by a spark struck from steel on flint.

17. *General Washington*—the great American soldier, patriot, and statesman who won independence for his motherland. He became the first President of the U.S.A.

18. *Congress*—the legislative body of the U.S.A. including the two Houses of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

19. *Bunker's Hill*—the first battle of the War of Independence. It was won by the colonists.

20. *1776*—the year of the Declaration of Independence.

21. *Federal or Democrat*—after the American War of Independence was won by the colonists, they

were divided into two parties—Federal and Democrat. The former wanted all powers to be vested in a Central Government but the latter favoured a loose confederation of largely independent States.

Questions

1. Write character sketches of Rip Van Winkle and his wife.
2. Relate briefly the strange experience that befell Rip Van Winkle in the Katskill mountains.
3. Give an account of the adventures of Rip Van Winkle after he woke up from his long sleep.
4. Relate, in the words of Rip Van Winkle, his impressions of things after he woke up and came down from the hill.

4. THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

Guy de Maupassant (1850—1893) is a master storyteller of France, who has probed the innermost secrets of the human heart. His stories are well constructed and are like a spider's web with neither a thread too many nor a thread too few. *The Diamond Necklace* is one of his best-known tales, though it is not written in his characteristic manner. Most of his other tales are marked by an atmosphere of tragic horror—a foretaste in De Maupassant's imagination of the madness in which he was to end his life. His fame as a craftsman of the modern short story has spread all over the world.

1. *Breton*—from Brittany, in the north-west of France.

2. *Tureen*—deep covered dish for holding soup, etc., at table.

3. *The wing of a plump pullet*—a rare dish of chicken.

4. *Seine*—the river that runs through Paris.

5. *Palais Royal*—a district in Paris.

6. *Champs-Elysees*—a fashionable street in Paris.

Questions

1. Describe the difference between the characters of Mathilda Loisel and her husband.

2. Comment upon the statement: "How strange, how variable are the chances of life!"

3. Write a brief summary of the story.

4. Do you think pursuit of pleasure can ever lead to peace of mind?

5. AN UNPREJUDICED GIRL

Anton Chekov (1860 - 1904) was born in a family of traders. He studied at the Moscow University, and even during his student career began writing short stories which brought him considerable fame. He is one of the greatest humorous short story writers of the world. His plays, the best-known of which are *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Three Sisters* and *Uncle Vanya*, have been translated into many languages and produced successfully in many lands.

1. *Copek*—a Russian copper coin which is nearly equal to a farthing.

2. *Baritone voice*—musical voice between tenor and bass.

3. *Rink*—a sheet of natural or artificial ice for skating.
4. *The Hermitage*—the name of a hotel.
5. *Romping*—wrestling.
6. *Scamps*—rascals, knaves.
7. *Salte mortale*—standing on head with legs dangling in the air.

Questions

1. Explain the title of the story.
2. What was Maxim K. Salintov's secret that tormented him before his marriage?
3. Discuss the characters and the situation in this story.
4. Illustrate from this story what is meant by *suspense* and *surprise*.

6. HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN REQUIRE?

Leo Tolstoy (1823—1910) is easily the greatest representative of Russian literature. His best known novels are *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. The present story deals with his deep-rooted conviction that a man should have only as much land as he can till conveniently and which is sufficient for his needs. The deep moral fervour that animates many of his writings has become proverbial. Though born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he renounced his wealth in pursuance of his own beliefs and ideals.

1. *Dessiatin*—an area of a little less than three acres.

2. *The Barina*—the great lady.
3. *The Mir*—village commune.
4. *The Starshina*—the village headman.
5. *Versts*—1166.2/3 yards.
6. *Khalat*—a long coat.
7. *Tarantass*—a light two-wheeled cart.

Questions

1. Summarize the story in your own words.
2. What is the moral of the story?
3. Write what opinion you form of the character of Pokhom. Is he a typical peasant?
4. What is the remedy for curing people of unlimited land-hunger?

7. THE PHYSICIAN AND THE SARATOGA TRUNK

R. L. Stevenson (1850—1894) is a well-known writer. He is one of the greatest prose writers in English and some of his famous novels—particularly, *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *Catriona* have an irresistible appeal. His stories are noted for the imaginative and exciting manner in which he handles his subject. The present story is taken from *The Suicide Club*, a series of short stories linked together in a continuous narrative.

1. *Poodle*—a pet dog with curly hair.
2. *Wardrobe*—a shelf or a cupboard where clothes are kept.
3. *Concierg*—a doorkeeper.
4. *Eavesdropping*—overhearing.
5. *Farrago*—medley, hotch-potch.

6. *Suite*—set of persons in attendance, set of things belonging together.

Questions

1. Summarize the story in your own words.
2. What is the mystery behind the murder of the blond young man ?
3. What part is played by the following persons in the affair : Dr. Noel, Madame Zephyrine, Colonel Geraldine, Prince Florizel.
4. Reproduce the story in the person of Prince Florizel.

8. ROADS OF DESTINY

William Sidney Porter (1862—1910) wrote under the pen name "O. Henry." He is considered to be one of the best American short story writers. His stories are specially noted for their economy of detail, racy style and successful handling of the plot.

1. *Postillion*—one who rides the near horse when only one pair is used to draw a carriage and there is no driver on the box.

2. *Monseigneur*—French for "My Lord".

3. *The Silver Flagon*—the name of an inn.

4. *Mademoiselle*—French for "Miss."

5. *Chateau*—a French castle or country house.

6. *Comte*—count.

7. *Chattering teeth* - teeth shaking together with fear or cold.

Questions

1. Summarize the story in a hundred words.
2. Explain the title of the story.

3. Do you like this story? Give reasons for your answer.

4. What is the motive behind David Mignot's desire to fight Marquis De Beaupertays?

9. THE TRUTH ABOUT PYECRAFT

H. G. Wells (1866—1946) was born in a poor family. His mother was a lady's maid and her ambition was to see her son settled as a salesman in a drapery emporium. But H. G. Wells was destined for greater things. His short stories are generally short scientific romances. Probably one of his best-known short stories is *Time Machine*, but *The Truth about Pyecraft* is one of the most humorous. Among his famous novels are *Kipps* and *The History of Mr. Polly*. His *Short History of the World* is a monumental work. A socialist, a scientist and a prophet, all rolled in one, H. G. Wells displayed unceasing and ever-stimulating fertility of mind and pen.

1. *Wheezed for a spate*—breathed audibly for a while.

2. *Obese*—fat.

3. *A priori*—from cause to effect.

4. *The lattice*—the screen.

5. *Piping-bawl*—shrill call.

6. *Santos Dumont*—the name of an aviator.

7. *Euphuism*—substitution of a mild expression for a harsh one.

8. *Niente, nefas*—nothing wrong.

Questions

1. What causes "Weight"? Would an apple weigh the same on the moon as on the earth?
2. Summarize the story in about a hundred words bringing out its points of humour.
3. What sort of man does the teller of the story seem to be? What is his name?
4. Can you think of any other way for Pyecraft to solve the problem of living in his room?

10. JEEVES AND THE YULETIDE SPIRIT

Pelham Grenville Woodhouse (1881—) is a prince of modern short story writers. His stories clearly indicate that the present-day short story has travelled a long way from the style and technique of the short stories of the nineteenth century. They are much more psychological and naturalistic, and lay emphasis on character rather than on plot. They present only a vivid glimpse of life. P. G. Woodhouse is always riotously funny and the present story is a characteristic specimen of his work.

1. *Kippers*—salmon or herring (a kind of fish).
2. *S. to the core*—thoroughly terrified.
3. *Chummily*—intimately.
4. *Beetled*—hung.

Questions

1. What is the purpose of the story? Do you think it gives a serious view of things?

2. What opinion do you form of the character of Jeeves ?

3. What parts do Jeeves and Miss Wickham play in the story ?

4. What sort of person does the writer of the story seem to be ? What is his name ?

5. Summarize the story in the person of Miss Wickham.